ASPECTS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE ART SONGS OF RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS BEFORE THE GREAT WAR

BY

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DISsertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Musicology in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014

Urbana, Illinois

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This dissertation explores how the art songs of English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) composed before the Great War expressed the composer’s vision of “Englishness” or “English national identity”. These terms can be defined as the popular national consciousness of the English people. It is something that demands continual reassessment because it is constantly changing. Thus, this study takes into account two key areas of investigation. The first comprises the poets and texts set by the composer during the time in question. The second consists of an exploration of the cultural history of British and specifically English ideas surrounding pastoralism, ruralism, the trope of wandering in the countryside, and the rural landscape as an escape from the city.

This dissertation unfolds as follows. The Introduction surveys the literature on Vaughan Williams and his songs in particular on the one hand, and on the other it surveys a necessarily selective portion of the vast literature of English national identity. The introduction also explains the methodology applied in the following chapters in analyzing the music as readings of texts. The remaining chapters progress in the chronological order of Vaughan Williams’s career as a composer. Chapter Two considers the three Barnes songs composed between 1901 and 1903 and published in The Vocalist. The chapter argues that these songs, in pitting the rural against the urban as seen in salient aspects of their music, epitomize Vaughan Williams’s engagement with the contemporary “Back-to-the-Land” movement. Chapter Three examines the Songs of Travel (text by
Robert Louis Stevenson). This chapter argues is that Vaughan Williams’s 1904 song cycle displays the composer’s fascination with the figure of the gypsy, and the life of the wanderer—preoccupations that were characteristic of the gypsophilia of the day—represented in his music by such figures as a tramping motive and a rhythmic fingerprint. Chapter Four is dedicated to the 1909 cycle On Wenlock Edge (text by A. E. Housman). Once again, this cycle pits country against city. It also confronts modern with Roman Britain and introduces other icons of Englishness, in particular the church. All this marks a new development in Vaughan Williams’s progress as a song composer, namely the introduction of ideas associated with pastoralism and the difficulties of the rural life. Chapter Five discusses the critical change in the composer’s work caused by the Great War. Despite continuities in Vaughan Williams’s composition that would persist throughout his career, these years saw a shift in focus towards themes of mortality and spirituality, and new musical techniques.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of countless people. First, I must thank my advisor, Dr. Christina Bashford, who has read countless drafts of this document and given me many cups of tea while trying to make sense of my prose. I could not have finished were it not for her. Dr. Bashford’s influence has touched every aspect of this paper. Any remaining deficiencies are my own.

I am grateful for the support and expert advice of the members of my committee, Professors Herbert Kellman, Gayle Sherwood Magee and Chester L. Alwes. Herbert Kellman and his wonderful wife, musicologist Susan Parisi, have invited me into their home, fed me, and offered friendship and advice over the years for which I will always be truly grateful. Gayle Magee and Chester Alwes kindly agreed to be on my committee and have been cheering me on to the finish. Their advice is worth more than gold.

I am also grateful to have had the resources of the libraries of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Hillsdale College, Cambridge University, Trinity College Dublin, the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Charterhouse, and the British Library at my disposal. I must take the opportunity to thank the many librarians who have helped me over the years, in particular Marlys Scarborough and the late Leslie Troutman in the Music Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Judy Leising, Maurine McCourry,
Linda Moore, and Martin Nord in Mossey Library at Hillsdale College; and Laura Smyth at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

Writing a dissertation while teaching full-time can be hectic. My (now former) student, Rebecca Schoon, allowed me to hire her to do photocopying and other such tasks when I did not have the time, and for this I shall be forever grateful. I am also thankful for my (now retired) colleague in the Classics Department, Dr. Lorna Holmes, who shared her office with me one summer when I did not have one. Additionally, I must also thank the eminent classicist Grace Starry West for our most insightful conversations about Lucretius and his nature poetry.

Over the years, whenever I have gone to England to do research Brian and Joyce O’Regan opened their home to me, fed me and gave me a place to stay. Not everyone is so blessed. Mere words cannot express the gratitude I feel for their kindness over the years.Sadly, Brian passed away two weeks before I gave this document to my committee.

Ann and Tony Williams drove me around all the locations mentioned in *On Wenlock Edge*. I had a marvelous time, and I will be forever grateful for their kindness and hospitality. I would also like to thank my in-laws, Denis and Colette Weaire for all their support over the years, and in particular for Denis’s help in obtaining access to the Trinity College, Dublin library.

You will see the name Byron Adams across the pages of this dissertation. He first introduced me to the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams as an undergraduate, and he has continued to publish on and perform the music of this
most extraordinary composer in the years since. My own work and the work of so
many other scholars would not exist without the work of this man. My gratitude
knows no bounds.

Lastly, I must thank my husband, Gavin Weaire. He has taken over most
of the household duties that we usually share (and all of the cooking) so I could
finish this document while also teaching full-time. I hope he thinks it was worth
it!
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: APPROACHING THE ART SONGS

…if he consciously tries to express himself in a way which is contrary to his surroundings, and therefore to his own nature, he is evidently being, though perhaps he does not know it, insincere. It is surely as bad to be self-consciously cosmopolitan as self-consciously national.¹

I. Vaughan Williams and Song Surveyed

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) is now generally regarded as one of the leading British composers of his generation. He received recognition during his lifetime for his work on the English hymnal, his compositions with sacred texts, his music for the stage, and, in particular, his music for orchestra. Throughout his life he worked as a conductor, an adjudicator, a church organist, an educator, folksong collector, and a mentor while continuing to compose daily. His writing and lectures on music or music-related topics, collected together in the volume National Music and Other Essays, remain a standard source for all students of British music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, regardless of their focus. Few nowadays question the stature of Ralph Vaughan Williams as a composer, but the study of his ninety-three art song compositions and the poetry, people, and incidents that inspired them, has not been abundant.

I am here defining “art song” as a musical composition written for solo voice with instrumental accompaniment that was not originally part of another

musical work. Assessing the number of art songs composed by Vaughan Williams is trickier than one might expect. James Day, in the 1998 edition of his biography of the composer, includes a total of eighty-six songs. In this list he includes “Dirge for Fidele” (for two mezzo-sopranos and piano accompaniment) and “It was a Lover and His Lass,” which is described as a “part song for two voices with piano accompaniment.” Day also includes “Ye Little Birds,” a song written and performed in 1905, then destroyed. He does not include On Wenlock Edge, the cycle of six songs Vaughan Williams wrote and published in 1908-09. Michael Kennedy, long-time friend, biographer, and cataloguer of the composer’s works, included one hundred and one songs in his index of works. Within this category Kennedy includes the Five Mystical Songs (for baritone soloist, mixed chorus and orchestra) as well as songs from the opera Hugh the Drover, neither of which are included in Day’s list. Unlike Day, Kennedy does not include “Dirge for Fidele” nor “It was a Lover and his Lass.” Somewhere between both Day and Kennedy lies Alain Frogley. He includes On Wenlock Edge as well as “Dirge for Fidele,” but leaves out “It was a Lover and his Lass,” the Five Mystical Songs and

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3 James Day, Vaughan Williams, 299.

4 James Day, Vaughan Williams, 297-300.

the songs from *Hugh the Drover*. I am using Frogley’s number (ninety-three) since it is most closely aligned with my own definition.

Vaughan Williams’s symphonies, operas, masques, film music, and even his settings of English folk music and folksong arrangements have been studied extensively. Since mid-way through the composer’s life there have been discussions and studies in print of his music in general and his symphonies in particular. More recent studies of his symphonies include Byron Adams’s article, “The Stages of Revision of Vaughan Williams’s Sixth Symphony,” Murray Dineen’s paper “Vaughan Williams’s Fifth Symphony: Ideology and Aural Tradition,” and Alain Frogley’s study of the Ninth Symphony, which appeared in 2001. Indeed, many of the articles included in the collective *Vaughan Williams Studies* are devoted to examinations either of certain symphonies, or aspects of the symphonies or orchestral works in general. In his recent article “‘It’s Not Lambkins Frisking At All’: English Pastoral Music and the Great War” Eric Saylor discusses Vaughan Williams’s *Pastoral Symphony* (along with Elgar’s “recitation” *Une voix dans le desert* and Bliss’s cantata *Morning Heroes*) as a modernist example of one of the many types of English pastoral music that were

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written in the time surrounding the First World War. Most recently, Allan Atlas has examined the structure of the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis in terms of a Golden Section. Thus, the current scholarly examination of Vaughan Williams’s orchestral work is healthy and blossoming. That is also the case for his operas, masques, choral music and film music, thanks to the work of Byron Adams, Jeffrey Richards, Lionel Pike, Walter Aaron Clark, Nathaniel G. Lew, Alison Sanders McFarland, Charles Edward McGuire, Daniel Goldmark, Eric Saylor, Deborah Heckert, and Roger Savage. Study of Vaughan Williams’s exploration and use of English folksong has long been the domain of Julian Onderdonk, while Byron Adams, Jennifer Doctor, and Alain Frogley have opened discussions on Vaughan Williams and early twentieth century society, religion and culture.


Jennifer Doctor, in particular, has opened up the discussion of Vaughan Williams as a teacher, focusing on his female students (Elizabeth Maconchy, Grace Williams, and Ina Boyle).15 Byron Adams has written an article on Vaughan Williams and Shakespeare that discusses the possible insights and development of the composer’s creative process as well as his treatment of literature and his role as a “cultural nationalist.”16

Vaughan Williams’s art songs, however, remain somewhat neglected in comparison. There are, to date, only twelve extant scholarly works that deal with them.17 Herman Ould’s “The Songs of Ralph Vaughan Williams,” one of the early articles, is very general and only provides scant detail about each art song.


15 Jennifer Doctor, “‘Working for her Own Salvation”: Vaughan Williams as Teacher of Elizabeth Maconchy, Grace Williams and Ina Boyle,” 181-201.

16 Byron Adams, “‘By Season Season’d: Shakespeare and Vaughan Williams,” John Donne Journal 25 (2006): 183-197. Adams first uses the phrase “cultural nationalist” on page 184. While Vaughan Williams’s settings of Shakespeare are plentiful enough to make it impractical to discuss all of them in a single article, it is interesting to note that Adams does not mention the art song settings of Shakespeare, Three Songs from Shakespeare (1925).

17 I am speaking here specifically of published articles. Aside from these, there are several DMA dissertations that I will mention.
composed up to that point. Three other early studies, i.e. Ernest Newman’s “Concerning ‘A Shropshire Lad’ and Other Matters” (1918), William Kimmel’s “Vaughan Williams’s Choice of Words” (1938) and Ursula Vaughan Williams’s “Ralph Vaughan Williams and his Choice of Words for Music” (1972-1973), along with James McCray’s more recent “Collaboration: Ursula and Ralph Vaughan Williams” (1993), focus specifically on the composer’s choice of texts or his collaboration with his second wife, Ursula (née Wood). While these four articles (Newman, Kimmel, Vaughan Williams, and McCray) are not limited to a discussion of art songs, they suggest that the composer’s manner of choosing texts for his vocal music was consistent, regardless of genre. Of these, Ursula Vaughan Williams’s article is the most revealing. In it she explains the composer’s early exposure to literature and poetry, and the importance of these in the Vaughan Williams household. She states:

It was a household where there was plenty of time for everything, and one where all of them were expected to take their pleasures seriously. Reading aloud was a normal part of these pleasures, and the gown-ups devoted hours to the children’s education…his mother read stories to him and to his brother and sister. She read The Rose and the Ring, Prince Prigio, Sintram, adventure stories, Shakespeare’s plays, and all sorts of poems. So from a very early age, he was accustomed to hear the words of literature; the varied

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cadences of the English language were familiar; and poetry as normal an experience as prose.

In those days church-going was inescapable, and so, every Sunday, he heard and assimilated the language of Tudor England in Prayer Book and Bible. I think these early years gave him a feeling for English, as well as a great pleasure in exploring the books available in the house—a limited choice in some ways—for even Byron was considered ‘fast’, and newspapers were not permitted nursery reading, though a certain amount of current events, in curtailed form, became available through Aunt Sophie’s economical habit of cutting squares of newspaper for lavatory use.20

Ursula credits this early exposure to literature, poetry, and the Bible as affecting Vaughan Williams’s choice of texts for musical settings. She also associates her husband’s choices of texts and how they lend themselves to musical setting, with a personal connection he had with the poet, or, as with Walt Whitman, poetry that seemed “unencumbered with some of the burdens of the Classics.”21 James McCrays’s conclusions are similar, with the exception that McCray’s article deals primarily with Vaughan Williams’s settings, both choral and solo song, of his wife’s poetry. In each case, the text can easily be set to music and the composer had a personal connection with the text and the poet.

More recently, scholars have begun concentrating on more diverse issues with regard to the songs. In an article of 2002, Roger Savage discusses Vaughan Williams’s association with early twentieth-century England’s fascination with “gypsophilia,” specifically in relation to the composer’s R. L. Stevenson settings,

20Ursula Vaughan Williams, “Ralph Vaughan Williams and his Choice of Words for Music,” 81.

21Ursula Vaughan Williams, “Ralph Vaughan Williams and his Choice of Words for Music,” 82. Please see pages 82-85 for her discussion of his specific choices.
Songs of Travel. Savage defines ‘gypsophilia’ as “the late-Victorian and Edwardian idealization and rather selective emulation of the Gypsy traveler, an aspect of the age’s particular penchant for rural places, spaces, and faces.” He explains that while Vaughan Williams’s interest in gypsophilia can be most specifically associated with the Songs of Travel, and even somewhat with the composer’s Housman settings, the influence is all-pervasive. In particular, the composer’s setting of Songs of Travel encompasses the idea that the composer has wandered in the perfect, idyllic countryside, only to return home again to the realities of his social world. Savage returns to this setting (and others) in a later paper. Rufus Hallmark also examines Songs of Travel in his article “Robert Louis Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their Songs of Travel,” where he confronts the difficult task of sorting out the intended order of the published version of the songs as well as dating the appropriate manuscript material. My own article “A Critical Appraisal of the Four Last Songs” deals with the history, the problems of dating, and the possible meaning(s) of the four songs Vaughan Williams wrote toward the end of his long life. I discuss the possibility that these

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23 Savage, “Vaughan Williams, The Romany Ryes, and the Cambridge Ritualists,” 383. See also n. 2 on the same page for the etymology of this term.


four songs could have been part of two separate planned song cycles, one involving Classical subjects, the other a more intimate and even autobiographical cycle. In these it appears as if he is demonstrating two separate styles of song writing in that the former (which would include “Menelaus on the Beach at Pharos” and “Procris”) returns to the musical complexity that is first seen in the *House of Life*, while the second (“Hands, Eyes, Heart” and “Tired”) reflects the seeming simplicity of his early Christina Rossetti settings, or even his *Three Songs from Shakespeare* (1925). As such, these four songs reflect a life’s work in the genre and, at the end, an almost painful intimacy. In an article titled “‘O Farther Sail’: Vaughan Williams and Whitman,” Alain Frogley briefly discusses the *Three Poems by Walt Whitman* (1925) and Vaughan Williams’s fascination with the ground bass among other things.\(^{27}\) This piece is not completely devoted to the composer’s art songs, but, like Savage’s 2008 article, focuses enough on the genre to warrant a place in this review. Allan Atlas, a relative newcomer to Vaughan Williams studies, has recently published an article about the form and symmetry of ‘Silent Noon,’ the second song in *The House of Life* cycle.\(^{28}\) Atlas’s other article on Vaughan Williams’s songs focuses on the structural role of recurrent musical themes in *Songs of Travel*.\(^{29}\)


In addition to the twelve articles mentioned above, several performers have written DMA dissertations that discuss the songs. Franklyn Lynn Lusk set out to do an analysis of the text and music of *On Wenlock Edge* as well as an analysis of Verdi’s *Romanze.*\(^{30}\) Edwin S. Calloway and Lawrence George Johnson both examine song cycles derived from A. E. Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* (by composers Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, Arthur Somervell, John Ireland, and Ivor Gurney) and provide analytical discussions of the song cycles in question,\(^{31}\) and Mario Antonio Garcia discusses the idea of love of home and country and its influence on the song writing of Vaughan Williams as well as George Butterworth and Benjamin Britten.\(^{32}\) Garcia points specifically to Vaughan Williams’s ability to choose texts that demonstrate his patriotism and what Garcia calls the “natural beauty of England.”\(^{33}\)

Stephen Banfield, whose DPhil thesis\(^{34}\) later became the virtual textbook for English song studies,\(^{35}\) has made apparent the importance of English solo art

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song in the history of Western European music studies. Trevor Hold, inspired by Banfield’s work, published *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers* in 2002.\(^\text{36}\) Hold’s work differs from Banfield’s in that he is only focused on twenty composers, all of whom were linked in some way to the two pioneers of English song in the second Golden Age of English song (which he defines as lasting from the end of Victoria’s reign until the latter part of the reign of George V, ca. 1880-1930), Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford.\(^\text{37}\) All of the composers that Hold discusses were British-born, so there are no chapters on Percy Grainger or Frederick Kelly, both of whom contributed to the corpus of English song during this period but were born in Australia. All of the composers covered by Hold lived through and were affected by the First World War, and Hold only discusses settings of English poetry (not Welsh, French, or Latin texts), nor does he cover folk song settings, while Banfield covers all of these in his book. More recently (2010), Laura Turnbridge looks specifically at Vaughan Williams’s song cycle *On Wenlock Edge* while dealing with the question of tradition and pastoralism in a chapter provocatively titled “The Death of the Song Cycle” in her book *The Song Cycle*.\(^\text{38}\)


\(^\text{36}\) Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers*. See page xi of the preface for his credit to Banfield.

\(^\text{37}\) Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers*, ix.

In addition to the texts mentioned above, both Ursula Vaughan Williams and James Day, in their respective biographies of the composer, attest to the importance of song composition in Vaughan Williams’s compositional development. Day in particular notes that since Vaughan Williams continued to write songs at intervals throughout his entire career, we are able to see his style “expand in range and sensibility” throughout his compositional development, a change that Day also discerns in the changes in Vaughan Williams’s choice of poets. These are indications that his art songs are important works within his musical output.

Pairing Vaughan Williams and his large-scale compositions with Englishness and English national identity has become almost ubiquitous in recent years, yet discussions of his art songs and Englishness and English national identity has not been as prevalent. Stephen Banfield merely refers to Vaughan Williams’s use of themes that represent Englishness as “naïve outdoor youthfulness.” Banfield is, as I hope this dissertation will show, mistaken. Vaughan Williams’s use of poems that contain references to the outdoors and outdoor activities and his musical representations of such are neither naïve nor

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41Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 87. Here Banfield is talking specifically about *Songs of Travel*. He does go on to say that at least Vaughan Williams used the opportunity to expand his harmonic palate and “communicate a large number of accessible poetic images to a large public; yet he did not explore new emotional areas…”.
youthful. This element of Englishness, the veneration of the countryside, was
certainly not the only element of Vaughan Williams’s Englishness, but it was an
important one, and one that continued to appear in his songs throughout his career.
Trevor Hold does not mention Englishness per se, but in his discussion of the
Vaughan Williams’s songs, he is careful to point out connections to folksong, or
folksong-like elements within the composer’s songs.42 While Vaughan Williams
was an avid folksong collector, and he often used actual folksongs within his own
compositions or modal scales or harmonies (that are often related to folksong)
throughout his career, there are other features that contribute to the Englishness of
Vaughan Williams’s songs, many of which will be discussed in this document.
Roger Savage and Laura Tunbridge have gone further in their discussions of
Englishness and Vaughan Williams’s art song. As noted earlier, in 2002 Savage
related the wandering trope to Songs of Travel and the gypsophilia that was
sweeping the country at the time.43 In 2010 Tunbridge discussed the pastoralism of
Vaughan Williams’s cycle On Wenlock Edge as part nostalgia for a pre-industrial
age, and part escapism for the city dweller.44 Tunbridge sees a darker undertone in
the poems chosen by the composer and an irony in the popularity of what she calls
“a collection of faux-folk poems written by a University of London professor of

42 See Trevor Hold, Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers, 102-123.
I will discuss gypsophilia in Chapter Three.
44 Laura Tunbridge, The Song Cycle, 131.
She goes on to discuss an underlying sadness in the choice of poems that evoke a landscape that no longer exists and the tragedy of war.

Throughout his life Vaughan Williams was an avid reader of English poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction, and the texts he chose to set were drawn from his reading. As an adult he was continually on the lookout for texts that interested him. Once Vaughan Williams was no longer a student, there were only two instances among his art song compositions where he did not choose the texts he set, but responded to circumstances. The first instance was when he set four poems by his niece, Fredegond Shove. These were set out of a sense of family obligation. The second instance did not occur until near the end of his life when he wrote the *Ten Blake Songs*. In 1957 the Blake Centenary asked Vaughan Williams to provide music for a documentary film of Blake’s pictures. Ursula recalls their visit:

The film makers brought screen and machinery and ran the film through and showed Ralph the poems they would like him to set. At first he was not at all enthusiastic. He had always admired Blake as an artist, but he did not care greatly for his poems. However, he said he would see what he could do, stipulating that the songs should not include ‘that horrible little lamb—a poem I hate.’

When the choice was his own, Vaughan Williams always set texts that he liked and that seemed to lend themselves naturally to being set to music, but not always poetry that was in vogue, or well thought of by critics at the time. Many of those

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46 Interview with Ursula Vaughan Williams, 15 June 1996.

47 Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 386. Ironically enough, the collection includes a setting of Blake’s “The Lamb.”
Poets and their works have now been included within the canon of English poetry, and subsequently anthologized widely.\textsuperscript{48}

In addition to the recognition Vaughan Williams received, the music of Vaughan Williams was also sometimes criticized (up to the period shortly after his death) as too simplistic, too popular, too rural, or unacademic, and unfortunately ‘the mud still sticks’ with the popular image of this composer.\textsuperscript{49} Academically we have moved on. It is true that Vaughan Williams did not engage in some of the intellectual compositional activities that seduced many of his European contemporaries such as the serialism of Schönberg or numerical secret programs of Alban Berg.\textsuperscript{50} The result is that during the era of the emancipation of the

\textsuperscript{48}Here I am thinking most particularly of A. E. Housman. See, for example, M. H. Abrams, gen. ed., \textit{The Norton Anthology of English Literature}, 6\textsuperscript{th} ed., Volume 2 (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), 1817-1824. I discuss the disparagement of Housman’s poetry in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{49}The following comments were all in response to Vaughan Williams’s \textit{Pastoral Symphony} in particular, and are exemplary of some of the criticism received by RVW, especially during his latter years and for about a decade after his death. Hugh Allen thought the symphony sounded like “V. W. rolling over and over in a ploughed field on a wet day”, Philip Heseltine (a.k.a. Peter Warlock) referred to the symphony as “like a cow looking over a gate”. These all appear in Michael Kennedy’s \textit{The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 155-156. This was, ironically, often the same complaint of contemporary critics (e.g., Sitwell, Kronenberg, and Blackmur, in particular) of A. E. Housman, a poet Vaughan Williams turned to time and again for texts. The specific nature of this criticism of Housman will be discussed in some detail in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{50}Vaughan Williams’s own comments about his European contemporaries are often humorous. For example, in the special memorial issue of \textit{Music & Letters} commemorating Arnold Schönberg, all Vaughan Williams said in the midst of other British composers and scholars more lengthy remarks about the German innovator was, “Schoenberg meant nothing to me—but as he apparently meant a lot to other people I daresay it is all my own fault.” (Ralph Vaughan Williams, “Arnold Schoenberg,” \textit{Music & Letters} 32, no 4 (October 1951): 322.) In a letter to his former student, composer Elizabeth Maconchy, about her piece \textit{Agrippa} (referring to Stravinsky) dated February 1935 he said, “…but still I do feel that you are capable of so much finer thought than that Russian Monkey-brain & that you injure your real self by condescending to use any of his monkey-tricks.” (Hugh Cobbe, ed. \textit{Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1895-1958} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 235).) As a last example, in a letter to his amanuensis Hubert Foss dated 2 January 1952, Vaughan Williams stated, “I am up chiefly for the first night of Wozzeck—up to the present Berg has merely bored me—but I went to a bit of a rehearsal the other day and I was so intrigued by the stage that I did not bother to listen to the music: which perhaps is the best way of
dissonance, a great deal of his music is, if not always tonal, at least modal.\textsuperscript{51} James Koehne explains this phenomenon thus:

> Although he was active as a composer through more than half the twentieth century, Vaughan Williams is subject to that curious time-displacement which dispatches composers like Sibelius, Rachmaninov and other so-called “anachronisms” of our century to some nineteenth-century netherworld. This massive displacement of “traditionalist” composers occurred in the tumultuous decades of the 1950s and 1960s, when intellectual fashion turned innovation into the all-consuming goal of art. To attach oneself to tradition, as Vaughan Williams did, was deemed an act of creative suicide.\textsuperscript{52}

Since all three of the composers Koehne lists (Sibelius, Rachmaninov and Vaughan Williams) are all still active fodder for orchestral programs throughout the Western world, it is perhaps time to stop looking at their decisions to ignore those more intellectual compositional devices as an act of “creative suicide.” It is now widely agreed that Vaughan Williams was a skillful composer, and more to the point, several scholars have argued for seeing his music as a type of modernism.\textsuperscript{53} Additionally, there is subtlety in his treatment of theme as well as a practicality in his approach to composition, orchestration, and performability that

\textsuperscript{51} The choral piece “Full Fathom Five” from Three Shakespeare Songs and parts of Symphonies 4 and 6 are non-tonal, as are a few of the songs from Along the Field. (Thanks are due here to Byron Adams, who reminded me of the choral piece.)


has in part contributed to the survival of his music in the repertoire. In his vocal
music, the felicitous choice of text and his continual desire for the
accompaniment, be it piano, some other instrument or combinations of
instruments, to support the singer fully in his or her task may have banished his
songs to the realm of ‘not difficult’ if not simplistic, and may have caused them to
be deemed unworthy of study. However, these songs are more subtly intricate
socially, culturally, and personally than might be apparent initially.

In addition, musicology in general tends to concentrate on large, rather
than small, genres. This tendency, probably more than any other, has led scholars
away from the study of Vaughan Williams’s (and other composers’) art songs.\textsuperscript{54}
Since the nineteenth century and the rise of the music critic, it has been the large
genres that get the most press. Marcia J. Citron, in her book \textit{Gender and the
Musical Canon}, relates this concentration on large genres to expansionist ideals in
society, and subsequently to the establishment of the musical canon. She says:

Reception [via the Music Critic] not only gives expression to
cultural metaphors but also provides for their control. The power
of the pen can shape mightily how these metaphors are
disseminated, understood, reinforced, or modified. A good
example is the emphasis on largeness that colored reception of
nineteenth-century music, which in turn reinforced expansionist
ideals in society at large. I am not saying that music reviews
directly influenced decisions on whether to colonize other areas of
the world. What I am suggesting is that the reviews contributed to
a mind-set favorably disposed to bigness and transcendence, and

\textsuperscript{54}The trend to study larger musical genres has not seemed to influence scholars against the study
of Schubert’s songs. However, perhaps the sheer number of them (over 600) has been part of the
reason. (Schubert’s lieder were and are extraordinary. With no other composer before him had
the genre risen to such heights. Schubert’s love of poetry and his skill in writing accompaniments
and beautiful, haunting melodic lines did more for the genre than any other composer before him
had.)
this probably reaffirmed tendencies already in existence in society.\footnote{55Marcia J Citron, \textit{Gender and the Musical Canon} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168.}

Citron’s work in this instance focuses primarily on gender politics in the establishment of the canon, but her comment is not unrelated to the current discussion: size does matter. Bruno Nettl provides us with another explanation, somewhat more general, but probably more apt. He explains that music historians are more concerned with discerning merit in music via a composer’s or piece’s association with other great composers or pieces (rather like a family tree), but if any of these composers or works are “popular” they will not be considered “great”:

In practice, the lines are not so sharp, but it seems clear to me that music historians are very much concerned with the excellence of the music they study. If, indeed, one cannot make a case for the outstanding merit of this music, one tries to show its association with other great music—it influenced, or was influenced by, a great master; or the composer wrote other, greater music; or he was the teacher or a relative of a major figure; and so on. The criteria of greatness or excellence in music have always been hard to identify; it is a case of ‘je ne sais quoi’. Yet complexity (in a quantitative sense) and magnitude play a major role, as they do in the world of music-lovers at large. Outright popularity (for instance, the composers represented in ‘pops’ concerts) accomplishes the opposite for musicologists; until quite recently, they proudly stayed away from the likes of Tchaikovsky, Offenbach, and Grieg.\footnote{56Bruno Nettl, “The Institutionalization of Musicology: Perspectives of a North American Ethnomusicologist,” in \textit{Rethinking Music}, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 306.}

From these explanations it appears that the art songs of Vaughan Williams, and perhaps the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams in general, was destined to be
malign for a while, regardless of genre.\(^{57}\) In the first instance, the art songs are small, intimate pieces, not often fodder for the critic’s pen. And, in the second instance, while Vaughan Williams did write many large-scale pieces for orchestra, band, and choir, he did not align himself with the great European teachers of the day. He studied with Max Bruch at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin for a few months in 1897-8, and with Ravel for three months in 1908, but neither association was long enough to establish any kind of dynastic link. (In any case, his study with Ravel was not, at the time, likely to be seen in an advantageous light: Ravel was French, and younger than the English composer, neither fact advantageous to Vaughan Williams in terms of public awareness.) Additionally, James Parsons, in his introductory chapter for the *Cambridge Companion to the Lied* in which he defends the need for the book, the first to document the Lied from its birth in the 1740s to what is seen as its demise during the Second World War, explains:

> While Lieder often are thought of as diminutive, given that a great many last but a short time when compared to sonatas, concertos, symphonies, or operas, both the history of German song and the density of expression encountered in many works comprising the genre belie that characterization.\(^{58}\)

\(^{57}\) Byron Adams discusses this phenomenon: “After the composer’s death in 1958, Michael Kennedy and Ursula Vaughan Williams loyally accomplished the heroic task of presenting the man and his work as he wished to be viewed by posterity. Their dual task was made more challenging by the adverse critical reaction against Vaughan Williams that had already begun to assert itself during the final years of the composer’s long life. Critical and academic disparagement of Vaughan Williams’s music deepened and accelerated throughout the next two decades. With the exception of James Day, Hugh Ottaway and a few other sympathetic authors, little substantial scholarly attention was paid to Vaughan Williams during this period; his music, though savored and performed by thousands in England and America, had become utterly unfashionable.” (Byron Adams, “Introduction,” xviii.)

Parsons’s comment is directed specifically toward Lieder, i.e. German art song, but the sentiment is applicable here. Combined with the three points of view listed above, a cursory glance in any of the standard music history textbooks shows the continuing focus on large genres. While this is slowly changing, the canon is still seen as being constructed primarily of large musical genres. The art songs of Vaughan Williams fall a bit outside of this parameter.

Vaughan Williams’s musical aesthetic was conscious and purposeful. He spent many years collecting, editing, publishing, and assimilating English folk song into his various musical compositions. This, in part, undoubtedly conditions his harmonic predilections: at least two of his songs (“Linden Lea” and “Blackmware by the Stour”) were written in the style of folksongs, and many of the others (like “Whither must I wander” and “When icicles hang by the wall”) exhibit folk-like characteristics. There is even an art song that quotes a popular hymn tune,\textsuperscript{59} and one that quotes a Leitmotif from one of Wagner’s operas.\textsuperscript{60} Since the composer always selected the poetry he set with care, he paid it the compliment of making a close reading when setting it to music. In every aspect of Vaughan Williams’s settings, from the cycles to the individual songs, the choices the composer makes reflect his attention to the nuances of each individual poet and poem. As my dissertation hopes to show, even on the odd occasion when Vaughan Williams alters a poet’s words, or leaves out a stanza, his purpose

\textsuperscript{59} “Orpheus with his Lute” from \textit{Three Songs from Shakespeare} quotes the hymn-tune \textit{Old Hundredth} in the first measure of the accompaniment.

\textsuperscript{60} “Love’s Last Gift” from \textit{The House of Life}.
is either to enhance the listener’s understanding of the text, make the meaning clearer—or at least less cluttered—or to enhance the musicality or set-ability of that particular text. A textual cut was often made because he considered a passage beneath the poet’s general level. Although not a poet himself, Vaughan Williams wrote vivid prose and had strong literary instincts that helped him to discern which words, phrases, or quatrains were best suited to a musical setting.

II. Scope of this Study

The entirety of Vaughan Williams’s corpus of art songs includes a variety of different types: the composer’s juvenilia, five children’s songs, several parlour ballads, two songs that were specifically written in the style of a Dorset folk song, a set of seven songs taken from his opera Pilgrim’s Progress, and ten cycles of songs (ranging from as few as two songs to as many as ten), the last of which was written to accompany the film The Vision of William Blake, Ten Blake Songs for voice and oboe. These art songs are spread across Vaughan Williams’s entire compositional career, displaying, each in its turn and in miniature, his compositional priorities, his favorite pieces written by other composers, his favorite authors, and what he considered to be an appropriate way for an English

61 Vaughan Williams’s compositional career is generally divided into five periods: the years up to 1908, 1908-1914, 1919-1934, 1935-1944, and 1945-1958. Hugh Ottaway and Alain Frogley discuss the periods at length in their article on the composer in Grove Music Online. See Grove Music Online, s.v. “Vaughan Williams, Ralph,” by Hugh Ottaway and Alain Frogley, , accessed December 28, 2013, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.hillsdale.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/42507. The section titled “Early Works” specifically discusses the division of the composer’s oeuvre into the five periods.
composer to express a national identity within his or her music. The purpose of this document, therefore, is to begin to fill these lacunae.\textsuperscript{62}

The limited amount and limited nature of the inquiry over the years into Vaughan Williams’s art song composition is particularly unfortunate as its study can reveal much about his compositional processes and aesthetic values, as well as how the composer related to the social and political atmosphere of Britain in general and of England specifically during the first half of the twentieth century. This study has three aims: to investigate certain of the art songs of Vaughan Williams prior to the Great War; to discuss those individual art songs as providing a specific reading of its text/poem; and to examine those same art songs as emblems of Englishness and/or English national identity. To be clear, this is how I read the songs. I think that Vaughan Williams was, consciously or not, choosing texts that fit a distinctive view of Englishness at the time. For this purpose I am limiting my discussion to eighteen of Vaughan Williams’s art songs that seem to most clearly exhibit these parameters within the time frame, specifically “Linden Lea,” “Blackmwore by the Stour,” “The Winter’s Willow,” and the song cycles \textit{Songs of Travel}, and \textit{On Wenlock Edge}. All of the songs discussed in this dissertation have been examined to some extent in articles, general books on the

\textsuperscript{62}In all fairness, it seems as if some views of Vaughan Williams’s art songs are gradually shifting. In Volume 2 of \textit{The Oxford History Of English Music}, John Caldwell expresses the following opinion of the music of Vaughan Williams: “Much of his smaller-scale output—music for unaccompanied chorus, folk song arrangements, music for military and brass bands, church music, minor cantatas, and so on—is only of ephemeral interest. But beside this must be placed a substantial body of music in the major forms: three of his symphonies, \textit{Job}, at least one of his operas, two major and several lesser choral works, instrumental concertos, chamber music, and songs. …Some of his tiniest works, moreover, are pearls of great price.”. (John Caldwell, \textit{The Oxford History of Music. Volume II: From c.1715 to the Present Day} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 337.)
composer’s work, or DMA dissertations. However, none thus far have examined these eighteen pre-war songs as a group. As such, they establish and display a type of Englishness and/or English national identity which has been identified as central to English culture prior to the Great War, as I hope to demonstrate in this document.

I have used World War I as a stopping point because it was a watershed moment, both for the composer’s personal history and for the history of the English nation as a whole. Vaughan Williams’s compositional life was disrupted for four years by his service in the Royal Army Medical Corps. As both Michael Kennedy and James Day explain, there were many works that were partially written during 1914 that did not see performance until after the war, including the opera Hugh the Drover (begun 1910, vocal score complete by May 1914, full score complete between June-August 1920, published 1924, first performed 14 July 1924), The Lark Ascending (partially written in 1914, first performed in 1920 and published in 1926) and Four Hymns for tenor with piano and viola obbligato or string orchestra and viola obbligato (written and in proof by July 1914, first performed and published in 1920). The few collections of works that we associate with the years of the Great War and its immediate aftermath—Songtime from 1915, Collected Folk Songs, volume 1, from 1917, the Motherland Song Books 1-4 from 1919, and Eight Traditional English Carols, also from 1919—are

To be clear, no DMA dissertation has yet to discuss “Blackmore by the Stour” or “The Winter’s Willow,” both settings of texts by William Barnes.

all collections of arrangements made by the composer, often from previous years. Because some of Vaughan Williams’s most famous “post-war” works (The Lark Ascending, in particular, as well as Hugh the Drover), were actually composed in whole or in part prior to the war, it is difficult initially to discern a change in the composer’s style, but there was a change. In his biography, James Day describes this change as a “stylistic expansion.” Day includes under this term the development of new forms, approaches, and textures in works (such as Flos Campi), syncopated rhythms, and a non-reactionary attitude to the present coupled with a non-nostalgic attitude to the past. Stephen Connock, who also acknowledges changes in the composer’s work after the Great War, has grouped the post-war works into three categories: Works of Comfort, Works of Detachment, and Works of Catharsis. When Vaughan Williams finally returned home from the war many of his friends had died, and he did not know if the world would remember him as a composer. His world had altered significantly. As a turning point for the English nation World War I hardly needs discussion. 1914 was a catastrophe of the first order and the Great War changed many aspects of English life. Historians Eric Hobsawm and Walter L. Arnstein discuss these

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65 See Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 76-77 for complete information on these collections.


67 James Day, Vaughan Williams, 49.

68 James Day, Vaughan Williams, 49-50. To be clear, Day was not specifically referring to Vaughan Williams’s art songs.

69 Stephen Connock, “The Death of Innocence,” Journal of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society 16 (1999), 12. The change in Vaughan Williams’s compositional style after the Great War will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five.
changes in great detail.\textsuperscript{70} David Grimley, though, sums it up the best. While he specifically references the death of composer George Butterworth on 5 August 1916 (killed in action during the Battle of the Somme) his sentiment applies to the Great War itself: “[It is] itself a monument, which seemingly marks the premature end of an aesthetic tradition and of the spirit of innocent idealism that supposedly characterized English Cultural life before the war.”\textsuperscript{71}

III. Methodological Framework I: Musical Readings and the Historiography of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Song

The idea that there can be multiple readings, or multiple interpretations, of a text by different readers is hardly new.\textsuperscript{72} In this respect, a “musical reading,” that is to say, how a composer sets a text to music, is one of many possible responses to poetry. Moreover, in the study of art song of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the concept of multiple readings has long been key to understanding many works of poetry. I will be discussing Vaughan Williams’s settings of eighteen poems as “readings” of those texts. Chapter Two will focus on the composer’s settings of three texts by William Barnes: “My Orcha’d in


\textsuperscript{71} Daniel M. Grimley, “Landscape and Distance: Vaughan Williams, Modernism and the Symphonic Pastoral,” 147.

\textsuperscript{72} With regard to multiple readings of texts, an example of multiple readings of a piece of nineteenth-century English poetry is the work of the distinguished Keats scholar, Jack Stillinger: \textit{Reading “The Eve of St. Agnes”: The Multiples of Complex Literary Transaction} (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). In agreement with other literary scholars, Stillinger posits that, regardless of what the author intended, there is always the possibility of more than one reading of a literary text. More importantly, he explains that it is possible for each reading to be equally plausible.
Linden Lea,” “Blackmwores Maidens,” and “The Winter’s Willow,” which became the songs “Linden Lea,” “Blackmwores by the Stour” and “The Winter’s Willow” when published in the *The Vocalist* (1902-1903). This chapter also delineates certain themes utilized in the Barnes songs that continue through the remaining songs under discussion: idealization of the countryside, pastoral nostalgia, rural activities, and place name association. Chapter Three will focus on the Robert Louis Stevenson cycle, *Songs of Travel*, and its association with gypsophilia and the wandering trope. Chapter Four will focus on the A. E. Housman cycle, *On Wenlock Edge*, particularly the role of place name association, past versus present (both historical and personal) and, once again, the wandering trope. To that end, the discussion is instigated by the text. Providing a systematic formal or harmonic analysis of each song is not the author’s concern. Numerous studies have done this already. I will not be proposing multiple readings for each setting of the eighteen songs under discussion, although the poetry certainly allows for such scrutiny. What I am proposing to demonstrate is that it is possible, based on a variety of evidence, to read these eighteen songs as manifestations of aspects of Englishness and English national identity.

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The historiography of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art song is substantial, having grown and changed quite a bit in terms of how it treats the interplay of words and music. Twentieth-century approaches to art song or Lieder in English cover a broad spectrum of possibilities.\textsuperscript{74} Richard Capell’s 1928 \textit{Schubert’s Songs} is organized chronologically, but his work is more useful in providing us with a snapshot of what people were concerned about in the late twenties. It is very class-conscious, contains little to no musical analysis beyond identifying a song as strophic or not, and his opinions regarding Schubert’s choice of poets have since been overturned by more recent works.\textsuperscript{75} Nine years later Ernest Graham Porter, in \textit{The Songs of Schubert}, organized his book by song type or by the author of the text (i.e., Longer Songs and Ballads, The Mayrhofer Songs, The Goethe Songs, etc.), and spent a lot of time discussing the texts of the songs, but only in terms of subject matter.\textsuperscript{76} Here individual songs are dealt with briefly and value judgments pronounced, sometimes backed up with musical and/or textual evidence, sometimes not. With the exception of Mayrhofer, Porter does not discuss the poets at all.

\textsuperscript{74} The following is by no means an exhaustive list, but merely a representative example. Additionally, while I am discussing approaches in English, these are not necessarily works about English song.


\textsuperscript{76} Ernest Graham Porter, \textit{The Songs of Schubert} (London: Williams & Norgate Ltd., 1937).
Twenty-five years after Porter’s offering Eric Sams published his first book on Lieder: *The Songs of Hugo Wolf*.77 This text, and his later book, *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, became, over the years, a kind of blueprint for song discussion in English.78 These two books contain preliminary material relating to each composer’s body of Lieder, followed by a chronological listing of each song that includes the poet, date of composition, key, and vocal range. The poem is then presented in English translation, followed by a few paragraphs of textual and musical description. Discussion about the scores appear in small print beneath this.

Sams’s works bookend a decade that seems particularly devoted to song, even if the offerings appear to suggest a decline in basic knowledge of music on behalf of the reading audience. In 1964 A. Craig Bell published *The Songs of Schubert*, but felt it necessary to include a chapter titled “The Song before Schubert.”79 Bell claimed that he planned to discuss those songs he found “outstanding in their own right or noteworthy in the course of Schubert’s development.”80 This book stands at the midpoint in song scholarship and it nearly approaches a more modern way of writing about song, but it is really a book devoted to those songs that Bell personally found pleasing. Only when he gets to the cycles are the songs listed individually and only a few are discussed in

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80 A. Craig Bell, *The Songs of Schubert*, ix.
any depth. Most of the discussion has to do with subject matter without any
discussion of context. Also in this decade Maurice Brown published a little book
called *Schubert Songs* for the BBC Music Guides.\textsuperscript{81} These guides were “designed
for listeners, performers, and students, [and] are written in non-technical language
by eminent musical authorities.”\textsuperscript{82} Perhaps as befits its stated purpose, this short
volume offers little or no textual or musical analysis, but it does illustrate the
subject matter of the songs with some musical examples. Despite its size (a mere
62 pages of text), it does cover substantial ground. Two other works written in
this decade are comparatively encyclopedic: Sydney Northcote’s *Byrd to Britten:
A Survey of English Song* (1966) and Carl Larsen’s “A History of Swedish Solo
Song.”\textsuperscript{83} While the title of the first renders the contents self-explanatory,
Northcote rationalizes his study by noting that: “there is the uncomfortable fact
that, in all ages, the English, with an aggravating modesty, are so often prone to
regard their musicians as second rate.”\textsuperscript{84} Therefore, this volume is, at its core, as
Northcote describes it, “an overview, a defense, an apology, and a cultural
history,”\textsuperscript{85} but it contains no musical or textual analysis. Larsen’s dissertation is
an encyclopedia of Swedish song composers from folksong through to the


\textsuperscript{82} Maurice Brown, *Schubert Songs*, 4. (Note, this explanation, which appears opposite the Table
of Contents, does not seem to appear in every copy of the book. I was able to peruse two separate
copies of the same book with the same publishing information, but the explanation of purpose
only appeared in one of them.)

\textsuperscript{83} Sydney Northcote, *Byrd to Britten: A Survey of English Song* (London: John Baker, 1966) and


contemporary scene. Most of the composers receive one page (or a little more), which includes a brief biography and very brief explanations of their songs with (maybe) a small musical example. The very nature of this work disallows for any kind of in depth discussion.

In the next decade, work on song focused on biography. In 1971 Stephen Walsh published *The Lieder of Schumann*, an insightful book, despite its lack of textual criticism or hard-core musical analysis. Its organization is primarily chronological and it does not delve into inter-disciplinary work. Instead, Walsh concentrates more on Schumann’s biography and his approach to lieder and its place within his *oeuvre*. Astra Desmond’s book, *Schumann’s Songs*, is somewhat similar to Walsh’s in that it is chronological, biographical, and includes explanations of the subject matter of the songs with a few musical examples. However, like Maurice Brown’s book on Schubert’s songs, it is written for the amateur since it is a BBC music guide. The next two works in English to appear in the 1970s were written by performers: Gerald Moore and the man he regularly accompanied, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, both published books on Schubert songs (Fischer-Dieskau’s volume was first published in German and then subsequently translated into English). Gerald Moore’s book, *The Schubert Song Cycles with Thoughts on Performance*, was written entirely for the accompanist. Each cycle

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is taken song by song, aside from its subject matter, and is discussed almost purely from a performance standpoint. While Moore’s book is not musicological, from a performance perspective it is well-thought out and displays his intimate knowledge of Schubert’s cycles and his years of performing them. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of Fischer-Dieskau’s book. Unlike Moore, he did not write a performance-based book and instead attempted a more scholarly tome (or one for the general public that had the appearance of scholarship). *Schubert’s Songs: A Biographical Study* was lightly researched, gossipy, and full of opinions.

89 Rufus Hallmark finishes the 1970s by providing us with a truly musicological work: *The Genesis of Schumann’s Dichterliebe: A Source Study*, which is, as the title indicates, a book specifically about the Schumann’s cycle *Dichterliebe*, and within that realm, specifically about the manuscripts relating to that cycle.90 The musical examples are hand-written. The poetic texts are provided in full in the original German. This is a piece of musicological scholarship of the most hardcore, positivistic kind.

In the 1980s the field of musicology changed and the perception of art song/Lieder91 changed as well. We even begin to see discussions of art songs cropping up in the field of English literature. In 1986, Nancy Jean Jackson wrote a dissertation entitled “Early Nineteenth-Century British Song Settings of Poems


91 It is understood that art song and Lieder are the same basic genre, just taking place in two different countries, i.e., Britain and Germany respectively.
from the Romances of Sir Walter Scott.” 92 Jackson had discovered that up to that point (1986), no one had either collected or discussed at any length the British songs whose lyrics came from Scott’s long romances (i.e., *The Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion: a Tale of Flodden Field, The Lady of the Lake, Rokeby, The Bridal of Kriermain, The Lord of the Isles*, and *Harold the Dauntless*). In Part II of her dissertation she offers the complete texts of the songs and the scores mentioned in Part I. This very interesting text would be quite useful for anyone wanting to perform these songs, many of which are not easily accessible in the United States in any other form. In Part I we find information about Scott’s middle-class musical background, his upbringing, and his interest in balladry. Later chapters are devoted to identifying and the subsequent specific study of the song texts from the various long romances. While there is some literary criticism here, as well as some musical analysis (i.e. whether settings are strophic or not, basic keys, transposition, the occasional big modulations, basic comparison between the way in which composers handle the same song texts in the use of half notes versus whole notes, etc.), both come across as rather thin in comparison with another work from the field of English Literature published two years previously: Lawrence Kramer’s *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After*. 93 However, this comparison is perhaps not entirely fair, 94 since Jackson

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94 Additionally, Lawrence Kramer is a professor of English as well as being a musicologist. For many years he was on the English faculty at the University of Pennsylvania and is now Distinguished Professor of English and Music at Fordham University in New York. He is
explains from the outset that one of the purposes of her study is “to form a
collection of early nineteenth-century British solo songs based on a portion of the
writings of Sir Walter Scott, thereby making them more generally available than
they are now to scholars in this country.”\footnote{Nancy Jean Jackson, “Early Nineteenth-Century British Song Settings of Poems from the Romances of Sir Walter Scott,” 3.} While Jackson did perhaps choose an odd subject for an English literature dissertation, unlike Kramer, she was not necessarily defining a new sub-field of an academic discipline. With Kramer’s book the author placed himself, along with Susan McClary, Philip Brett and others (such as Rose Rosengard Subotnik, Ruth Solie, Marcia Citron, and Elizabeth Wood), as a proponent of what has become known as New Musicology. In doing so, as he stated in his preface, he drew from various academic disciplines, including, “phenomenology, psychoanalysis, semiology, and the indispensable ‘ordinary’ forms of critical reading and musical analysis.”\footnote{Lawrence Kramer, \textit{Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After}, viii.}

Lawrence Kramer’s focus is primarily on non-dramatic poetry, and while his book includes a chapter about song, it is not a book devoted entirely to the study of song. Instead, his work focuses on the argument that the analysis of poem and the analysis of a piece of absolute music may work in tandem. Lawrence Kramer says:

\begin{quote}
may provide an interpretive framework for the other. Either way, the poem and the composition involved would form an intelligible pair—not in a vague or trivial way, but concretely and significantly. The My argument is that a poem and a composition
\end{quote}

generally acknowledged as one of the first proponents of what is/was referred to as “New Musicology”. Now “New Musicology” is often referred to as “Critical” or “Cultural Musicology”. Within my text I continue to refer to the phenomenon as “New Musicology.”
may converge on a structural rhythm: that a shared pattern of unfolding can act as an interpretive framework for the explicit dimension of both works. Alternatively, especially in vocal music, the structural rhythm of one work overdetermined play of poetic connotation and musical combination would cohere through the mediation of the rhythm by which both turn time into form.  

While this is interesting, and went far in the late 1980s and early 1990s in promoting the interdisciplinary, and, frankly, the seriousness of New Musicology, it is not necessarily this particular aspect of Lawrence Kramer’s work that is informing my own. Rather, it is his willingness to turn to other academic disciplines to inform his study. There is one other component between his work in Music and Poetry and this dissertation that does not coincide: my work lies exclusively in song, his did not.

Within the historiography of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art song, works specifically devoted to English song are not as plentiful as those on German Lieder. However, Stephen Banfield’s publication of Sensibility and...
English Song in 1985 began to fill this lacuna. Chronologically, Banfield’s text surveys English art song from the Victorians through English Modernism (i.e. the 1980s) and his methods of musical analysis range from description to reductive, depending on the nature of the song in question. There is no question that Banfield’s book provides a significant contribution to the field. However, this is a book that should be read with caution.

The 1990s and 2000s saw song scholarship flourish with the work of Susan Youens. To date she has written eight books on song: Retracing a Winter’s Journey: Schubert’s Winterreise (1991); Schubert: Die schöne Müllerin (1992); Hugo Wolf: The Vocal Music (1992); Schubert’s Poets and the Making of Lieder (1996); Schubert, Müller, and Die schöne Müllerin (1997); Hugo Wolf and his Mörike Songs (2000); Schubert’s Late Lieder: Beyond the Song-Cycles (2002); and Heinrich Heine and the Lied (2007). Her work is unfailingly


100 See his discussion of Herbert Howell’s “The Goat Paths” (pp. 218-220) for an example of the former, and his discussion of Eugene Goosens’s “Dear Heart, Why Will You Use Me So?” (pp. 352) as an example of the latter.

101 There are, unfortunately, some significant problems with Banfield’s book. These range in scope from the general organization, and tone, to more specific matters such as his habit of assigning value judgments based on moral issues (see, for example, his assigning Joseph Holbrooke and Rutland Boughton to the “lunatic fringe” (p. 102) and his likening composers’ attraction to and use of Housman’s verse to their own possible latent homosexuality (p. 289)). These problems do not necessarily outweigh its usefulness, but they do mean that one needs to be careful when consulting his text. For a more comprehensive list of both the positive aspects and the concerns involved with Banfield’s book, please see the following reviews: Trevor Hold, The Music Review 46:2 (May 1985): 142-144; Mike Smith, Tempo, New Series, 154 (September 1985): 37-41; Arnold Whittall, Music Analysis 4:3 (October 1985): 308-315; Michael Hurd, Music and Letters, 67:1 (January 1986): 59-60; Nicholas Temperley, Victorian Studies 30:1 (Autumn 1986): 131-132; Karl Kroger, MLA Notes, Second Series, 48:1 (September 1991): 108-110; and Byron Adams, Current Musicology, 49 (Fall 1992): 88-90.

focused equally on the text and music, and the textual analysis is equivalent to the musical analysis in both depth and length. And Youens’s work is, like Kramer’s, informed by other fields of study (i.e., history, literature, politics, religion, philosophy, etc.). However, never does she mention New Musicology in her books. Indeed, seeking to find whether or not she is influenced by New Musicology might be tantamount to a discussion of ‘which came first, the chicken or the egg.’ Susan Youens and Susan McClary were at Harvard together in the seventies; Youens completing her Ph.D in 1975 and McClary in 1976. Youens, like McClary, discusses gender, sex, deviancy, and women within her scholarship, but in quite a different way than McClary, and Youens’s only printed comment on her own style of musicology within the books mentioned above did not come until 2007 when she stated the following:

I should warn readers from the outset that I believe in “thick” musicology, in the kinds of scholarship that locates musical works in the midst of activity on all fronts, literary political, personal, religious, philosophical, national, sociological, and more.103

This statement is quite similar to a statement of Kramer’s that appeared in the preface to his Music and Poetry:

For both theory and interpretation, I have drawn freely on various disciplines: phenomenology, psychoanalysis, semiology, and the indispensable “ordinary” forms of critical reading and musical analysis. But my approach is not meant to be limited to or by these resources. Its responsibilities are to the demands of its subject


103 Susan Youens, Heinrich Heine and the Lied, xxiv.
matter, and its aim is to speak of music and poetry in the same language, wherever such a language may be possible.\textsuperscript{104}

So, perhaps it is best to say that each is informed by the other. Likewise, considering the close proximity of Youens and McClary’s graduate work, and their incorporation of similar issues (albeit in different ways), it seems reasonable to say that both were part of a general movement within the field.

The turning of the century has seen a greater interest in English song scholarship. I have already discussed much of this work in another section of this chapter, but there is more to be said. In 2001 Derek Scott published \textit{The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour}\textsuperscript{105} and the following year Trevor Hold published \textit{Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers}.\textsuperscript{106} In \textit{The Singing Bourgeois} Scott challenges the problematic concepts of “parlour song” (using instead the term “drawing-room ballad”) and the class orientation of this material. Scott reminds us that regardless of terminology (parlour song, folk song, ballad, popular song, blackface minstrel song, arias from operas), all types of “song” were being published by the sheet music industry for the middle-class home during the Victorian era. Hold, whom I have already discussed, focuses on the relationship between the poems and their

\textsuperscript{104} Lawrence Kramer, \textit{Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After}, viii.


\textsuperscript{106} Trevor Hold, \textit{Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers}. 

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musical settings during the time period he refers to as the Second Golden Age of Song in Britain (ca. 1880-1930).107

Readings of the texts Vaughan Williams set as art songs, viewed through the lens of Englishness/English national identity, has led me to consider a myriad of subjects, including (but not limited to) the history, politics, cultural context, and society surrounding their composition as well as biographical data of the composer and the poet, when necessary. When possible I incorporate the composer’s point of view, if known, as well as the perspective of the contemporary listener (or “reader” in the literary sense). However, this is not always the only perspective that will be considered. What Vaughan Williams thought about a text, or even what the poet thought about her or his own text is sometimes quite separate from how that text, or, in this case, song, is perceived or received. In the case of Vaughan Williams we do know that he read the poems closely and, with few exceptions, chose his texts with a specific purpose in mind. We also know, through his own professional writing and letters and accounts of contemporaries—some of whom are still living—how he read some of the texts. Added interest here also comes from the fact that, with few exceptions, many of the poets Vaughan Williams chose to set were still alive when he was setting their works to music. In short, what I am attempting to establish is the nature of Vaughan Williams’s own understanding of the poem via the musical setting and then relate it to aspects of English national identity.

107 Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers*, ix.
Also important to this discussion is the general Zeitgeist of the era as it relates to Vaughan Williams’s perception of national identity. Vaughan Williams was born in the later half of the nineteenth century (1872) and remained an active composer until his death in 1958, a period encompassing both the First and Second World Wars. He was also born during a time that is considered to be a re-awakening of English Music after Purcell, a movement traditionally referred to as the English Musical Renaissance, although the term is not without controversy. Thus, while certain aspects of the Zeitgeist might have changed throughout the eighty-five years that Vaughan Williams was alive, the one constant was the continuing search, conscious or unconscious, for a newly constructed, subtly changing English identity and its new expressions of Englishness. Specifically, as the Empire was lost and the wars were fought, the manner in which people self-identified and were identified was necessarily changed. This, in turn, affected the manner in which one might read both the choices a composer made in the poetry he or she opted to set as well as how an audience of the time might have interpreted the composer’s readings of that poetry. This dissertation is concerned with the construction of Englishness or English National Identity in Vaughan Williams’s songs before the Great War, and thus this dissertation is concerned with the depiction of Englishness before the Great War and before the Empire started to crumble.

\[108\] “English Musical Renaissance” in both its terminological and ideological uses has recently been called into question. However, since it is generally understood that there is a definite period of time implied by this moniker (1870-1940) it will be used in this study.
IV. Methodological Framework II: Englishness and English National Identity

Englishness and/or English National Identity can be defined as the popular national consciousness of the English people, a topic that demands continuous reassessment. The Englishness of the fourteenth century, for example, cannot possibly be the same sense of Englishness in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Derek Scott discusses this phenomenon in *The Singing Bourgeois*, and the definitions of Englishness that Scott focuses on are found in song. He explains that prior to Darwin’s 1859 publication of *The Origin of the Species*:

…the quality of ‘Englishness’ was deemed to lie largely in the possession of certain virtues. Indeed, in English Traits, published in 1854, Ralph Waldo Emerson fails to find anything particularly English about the rural population at all; his main concern is with the urban bourgeoisie. In ‘The Englishman’, a song published about 1840 which was very well known in the mid-century (it reached its twentieth edition by 1870), the Englishman is defined geographically by reference to his island home, his vast domain, and the symbol of his territorial, his flag. In ‘The Men of Merry England’, Englishmen are defined by their freedom, bravery, and enterprising spirit; but these are the same aspects of Englishness with which the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie would have identified, and which had already been celebrated in songs like ‘Heart of Oak’ (1759). Indeed, in a major new contribution to a neglected area of historiography, Gerald Newman locates the rise of English nationalism in the second half of the eighteenth century.109

In this dissertation I limit my discussion to the ideas of Englishness and English national identity current during Vaughan Williams’s lifetime. At this time, the national consciousness of the English populace was largely constructed via an English rural mythology.

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Throughout this study I use the terms ‘Englishness’ and ‘English national identity’ interchangeably or simultaneously and try to avoid the term ‘English nationalism’. Richard Taruskin claims that “nationalism is an attitude,” but ‘nationalism’ is also a term that spurs numerous definitions and sub-definitions, some of which are not particularly applicable to my study. I do not, for example, discuss the construction of the English nation, the English nation as a political entity, race relations, or colonial nationalism, all of which would fall under the general umbrella of “English nationalism.” But, to be fair, there are several terms in modern scholarship that are used frequently and sometimes interchangeably: Englishness and English national identity (the two I have chosen to use), plus British national identity, English nationalism, English cultural

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110 When the term English national appears, it is perhaps most convenient to think of it as representing an outside perspective. That is to say, the term “English nationalism” represents an outsider’s perception, while “Englishness” conveys the view from within.


nationalism and Englishry (to name a few). Additionally, elements that are used to define or prove music’s sense of nationalism often overlap with those that help define music’s national identity (in the case of this dissertation, Englishness or English national identity). Taruskin’s article on nationalism, for example (which, though it covers a wide range of nations, largely ignores England), discusses one element that keeps presenting itself as a marker of nationalism: folksong (the collecting of folksong, the use of folksong, the “value of folksiness,” and the imitations of folklore). This is another example of overlap between the concepts and terms of nationalism and Englishness/English national identity. The very idea of folksong, real or invented, suggests a rural quality which lies at the core of Vaughan Williams’s songs that I discuss from the era prior to the Great War.

The scholarly study of Englishness and English national identity is immense. It is a concern of a wide variety of academic fields of study, including but not limited to History, Political Science, English, Sociology, Psychology, Women’s Studies, Queer Studies, and, of course, Musicology. Many studies from these fields have been extremely helpful in establishing the arguments in the upcoming chapters. An important source for any discussion of Vaughan Williams and Englishness are his own thoughts on the subject. His lectures and articles are

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collected in *National Music and Other Essays*.\(^{114}\) As Michael Kennedy explains in the foreword of this collection, many of the essays and lectures contained in this volume set out to explain to the reader “what it was like to be the man who set out deliberately, with his friend Gustav Holst, to turn himself into an English composer.”\(^{115}\) Vaughan Williams believed that a composer must live in and be an active part of his community and make his music an expression of the whole life of that community.\(^{116}\) In this belief he was following that of his teacher, Hubert Parry. Vaughan Williams discussed the connection with Parry while explaining that the common factor between composers from the same country is their nationality:

> And this common factory is nationality. As Hubert Parry said in his inaugural address to the Folk Song Society of England, ‘True Style comes not from the individual but from the products of crowds of fellow-workers who sift and try and try again till they have found the thing that suits their native taste…Style is ultimately national.’\(^{117}\)

Vaughan Williams also thought that the musical future for any country lay not with the famous composers and their pieces that one would read about in the newspapers, but with the music one would hear in the home, in the schools, in the local societies, and in the pub.\(^{118}\) In short, Vaughan Williams believed that the musical future of any country lay with the folksong of that country. The

\(^{114}\) Ralph Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays*.


\(^{117}\) Ralph Vaughan Williams, “Should Music be National?”, 2.

composer also recognized that a country most appreciated its own customs, language, and art, when that country felt threatened.\textsuperscript{119}

In addition to the composer’s own words, \textit{The Character of England}, edited by Ernest Barker, provides an insight into the construction of Englishness by individuals contemporary with Vaughan Williams. In particular, the articles by J. A. Westrop, Vita Sackville-West, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Rebecca West, J. A. Williamson, and E. L. Woodward are valuable tools for assessing how the composer’s contemporaries understood and viewed the ongoing construction of identity and nationalist thought.\textsuperscript{120}

In the 1980s two separate collections of articles were published that dealt specifically with “Englishness.” The earlier of the two, \textit{Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920}, recognized that the idea of “Englishness,” or English self-identity, has been continually remade throughout history. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, the two editors, were, however, concerned primarily with the construction of identity in the forty years surrounding the turn of the century and the music of that era plays a central role in their study.\textsuperscript{121} The later collection of articles is the most inclusive and comprehensive study of British national identity to date. It is a three-volume work entitled \textit{Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British}


National Identity, edited by Raphael Samuels. Like Barker’s collection of articles, Samuels gathers some of the most influential scholars of British national identity. Distance of time has enabled the authors of the articles to assess more critically some of the issues brought forth in Barker’s collection.

A substantial aspect of “Englishness” during this period is the ideal of the rural, sometimes referred to as “radical ruralism.” Jan Marsh discusses the idealization of the rural as a backlash against industrialization in her monograph Back to the Land: the Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880 to 1914. Her work correlates directly with that of English historian Martin J. Wiener. Specifically, it compliments his monograph English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980. Connected to the idealization of the rural was the practice of place identification. (Within the context of Vaughan Williams studies, this is a particular concern in the composer’s settings of texts by A. E. Housman and, to some extent, William Barnes. This practice is discussed in Ian Baucom’s monograph Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and

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122 Raphael Samuels, ed., Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity (Routledge: London and New York: 1989). This is a three-volume set: Volume 1: History and Politics; Volume II: Minorities and Outsiders; Volume III: National Fictions. Of the three, volumes one and three have been most useful for my work.

123 Jan Marsh, Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880 to 1914 (London, Melbourne and New York: Quartet Books, 1982). This phenomenon (the idealization of the rural) is sometimes referred to as the “Back to the Land” movement and often includes three basic elements: “the return to the land, the revival of the handicrafts and the simplification of daily life.” See page 7 of Marsh’s introduction for more information.


125 I discuss this matter in Chapters Two and Four.
the Locations of Identity, and in Robert Stradling’s article “England’s Glory: Sensibilities of Place in English Music, 1900-1950.”

In recent years Alain Frogley has blazed a trail for scholars interested in the connection between Ralph Vaughan Williams and constructions of “Englishness.” His introductory essay, “Constructing Englishness in Music: National Character and the Reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams” in Vaughan Williams Studies was the first such article to deal solely with the topic and to recognize it as a subject worthy of study in and of itself.

Vaughan Williams was one of many composers, writers, artists, poets, and others, connected, either by accident or design, to the constructions of Englishness and English national identity. Therefore, only some of what follows in this study applies specifically to Vaughan Williams. However, most of the comments regarding Englishness or English national identity apply to many, if not most, of Vaughan Williams’s colleagues and contemporaries. Likewise, Englishness and thoughts about English national identity, often appearing under the guise of anti-industrialism or radical ruralism, were hardly specific to England or Great Britain. Similar ideas arose in nearly every European country (and even in some non-European countries) throughout the nineteenth century to varying degrees:

Britain is not exceptional after all. Significant ‘non-industrial’ themes appear in the culture of all industrial nations. These themes


127 Alain Frogley, ed, Vaughan Williams Studies, 1-23.
may be identified as ruralism, idealizing non-urban, non-industrial life: traditionalism, stressing continuity with a pre-industrial past; a persistent critique of the ‘quality of life’ created by “modernization”; and the patterns of bourgeois consumption and aspiration which seem to echo those of the landed aristocracy. Moreover, these were not always mere survivals; many were actively revived, or even invented, in that great age of the ‘invention of tradition’, the late nineteenth century (Hobsbawm, 1983).128

Two Vaughan Williams scholars have attempted to illuminate the elements, stylistic or otherwise, that determine “Englishness” in early twentieth-century music. Lewis Foreman, the more specific of the two, provides a list of traits that help (in his view) determine whether or not a piece of music, or music by a certain composer, can be considered ‘English,’ and to what degree. Foreman’s list is as follows:

(1) folk material—folksong, folk dances
(2) traditional material—popular forms, marches, dances, ballads, music hall songs
(3) antique dance and other forms, particularly from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
(4) settings of English literature/literature in English, with some poets engendering centuries intense reactions (e.g. Housman, Hardy, Whitman129 and those from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), these settings often anthologized into composite texts
(5) programmatic evocations of English literature
(6) programmatic subject matter from history or legend
(7) ceremonial music
(8) textual characteristic, scales, rhythm/metre, melodic line, harmony spacing, orchestration
(9) characteristic forms, some invented such as the ‘Phantasy’ and the orchestral song cycle; some revived such as the oratorio and the symphony


129 Walt Whitman was an American poet, but Foreman included him in this list, perhaps because Whitman “engendered intense reaction” among the English composers.
(10) characteristic moods, tempi
(11) Cathedral and ecclesiastical tradition; use of plainsong melodies and texts of the established Roman Catholic liturgy
(12) settings of Biblical texts in the King James Version, at times anthologized in conjunction with English poetry
(13) evocation of place

Obviously, with the right application, some of the items of Foreman’s list could go far to establish the national musical identity of almost any country (specifically items 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 13). This does not, however, negate their usefulness as signifiers of Englishness when employed by an English composer.

Alain Frogley, in a manner rather more nuanced than Foreman’s list-making, envisions the elements of Englishness on a broader scale. Frogley views the whole situation as resulting from conditions of class and locale:

[A] perception began to develop amongst the ruling classes that, for British pre-eminence to be maintained, there would need to be a deliberate fostering of national identity and solidarity, and an associated promotion of certain moral and social qualities. These qualities were for the most part seen to be those of the countryside, particularly insofar as this embodied an idealized English past, as against the corrupting influences of the modern city: both Tudor and rural England offered an antidote to the ills of urbanization and

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131 Robert S. Hatten makes a similar argument in *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994). After a lengthy discussion of the attributes of Pastoralism, he explains that while all of the characteristics may not be present, it is usual to have some combination of them. See, in particular, pages 82–84. In yet another article concerned with the evidence of tropes and their possible meanings, please see Mark Evan Bonds, “The Sincerest Form of Flattery? Mozart’s ‘Haydn’ Quartets and the Question of Influence,” *Studi Musicali* 22:2 (1993): 365–409. Pages 365–370 are concerned with the topos of dedicatory rhetoric and Bonds sets out to prove that a letter from Mozart to Haydn is, in fact, a letter of dedication despite its being addressed “To my dear friend Haydn” (see page 366). His argument lies in the fact that the letter contains all of the significant rhetorical devices of dedication (tropes). This is, of course, the other way around from my argument here, but I believe the same conclusion can be reached.
industrialization, which threatened to undermine nation and empire.\textsuperscript{132}

He goes on to note specifically how Vaughan Williams embodied the idea of what it meant to be an English composer, in the fullest sense of the term:

At its simplest level, Vaughan Williams’s reputation as a nationalist composer is based on four overlapping elements: his published writings arguing the importance of national roots for musical styles; work as a collector, arranger, and editor of native folksongs and hymn tunes, educational and administrative activity as a teacher, competition adjudicator, etc.; and the manifold influence on his music of a variety of English musical, literary, and other kinds of sources, above all folksong, Tudor and Jacobean music and English literature from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most notably the King James Bible and Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{133}

There are four specific areas where Foreman and Frogley overlap in their evaluations: the use of folksong/folk material; the use of what Foreman refers to as ‘antique music’ and Frogley terms ‘Tudor and Jacobean music’; the setting of English literature or poetry; and the use of texts drawn from the authorized version of the Bible. These four areas are most easily identified by scholars and most easily recognized by lay listeners. In this dissertation I am hoping to continue what Foreman and Frogley have started. In the songs I discuss it is possible to determine their “Englishness” based on four main elements: Vaughan Williams’s use of folksong elements; settings of specifically English poetry; evocation of English places and place-names; and the idealization of the rural via

\textsuperscript{132} Alain Frogley, “‘Getting its History Wrong’: English Nationalism and the Reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams,” 150.

\textsuperscript{133} Alain Frogley, “Constructing Englishness in Music: National Character and the Reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams,” 5.
the use of the country’s fascination with gypsies and the gypsy lifestyle (also
known as gypsophilia) and the wandering trope.

Another concern here is the conflicting identities of “English” and
“British”. This problematic dichotomy stems from one of the fundamental
questions in studies of nationalism and national identity: what exactly
constitutes a nation? As the philosopher Ross Poole asks, in his book *Nation and
Identity*:

> but what is the Nation? And what is it about the nation which
> supports—or has seemed to support—the claims made on its
> behalf? If the nation is the source of political authority, what is the
> source of its political authority? Why is it our nation, rather than
> our class, region or political commitment that demands political
> recognition?  

Benedict Anderson, in his introductory chapter of *Imagined Communities*,
answers Poole’s queries:

> In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following
> definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community—
> and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.  

During Vaughan Williams’s lifetime, Great Britain fought in two world wars, a
fact that unified Great Britain as a nation. During that period (and, for certain
scholars even now), a marked distinction existed between the English, the Scots,
and the Welsh.  

Outside of the unified identity provided by Great Britain’s
participation in the two world wars the idea of national identity was more locally

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136 The complexities of the interaction between Irishness and Britishness in Irish Unionism are too
great to go into detail here.
specified than the adjective “British” suggests. Derek Scott, in The Singing Bourgeois, also discusses this phenomenon:

After the Napoleonic Wars and before the 1890s, patriotic songs were almost entirely concerned with England: examples are ‘England, Europe’s Glory’ (c. 1859), “England’s Strength” (1860), ‘England’s Greatness Still Endures’ (1864), and ‘England’s Heroes’ (1880). All of these songs could have used ‘Britain’ in their titles with little change of meaning. England was Britain at this time. In the 1890s and later, however, the word ‘England’ tended to be preferred as part of a personal emotional appeal: this is epitomized by W. E. Henley’s poem ‘England, My England’, which was set to music often in the early twentieth century. As part of a broad patriotic appeal, the word ‘British’ was better suited to the age of ‘new imperialism’ since it acted as a claim upon the loyalty of the Empire’s subjects in the suggestion of homogeneous British imperial unity.137

Used as a lens through which to view the idea of nation, nationalism, and national identity with regard to the British Isles, Anderson’s thesis and Scott’s explanation bring issues of nationalism into clearer focus. When dealing with outsiders, particularly in war-time circumstances, Great Britain presents itself as a united front, as a single nation with a unified conception of national identity. However, when not dealing with outsiders, and when not in the midst of a devastating war, Great Britain is divided into its various nations, ideologically, geographically, and politically, and thus the concept of national identity is less obviously unified.138

Because the primary subject of this document is art song rather than folksong (which would necessitate defining English as distinct from Welsh, Irish, etc.), and

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137 Scott, Derek, The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour, 170.

138 Another excellent analysis and summary of this phenomenon appears in Kathleen Paul’s article “Communities of Britishness: Migration in the Last Gasp of Empire,” included in British Culture and the End of Empire, ed. Stuart Ward (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 180-199. The importance of the concept and definition of Britishness and nationality to the government and her policy-makers can be seen in the following: the 1948 Nationality Act, the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the 1971 Immigration Act, and the 1981 Nationality Act.
not in defining English art song as distinct from any other art song in Great Britain, the terms ‘English’ and ‘British’ may, theoretically, be used interchangeably. However, I choose to retain the politically charged distinction between ‘English’ and ‘British,’ using them as I deem appropriate.

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In this introductory essay I have ventured to discuss a few of the works that are considered landmarks in their respective fields and/or works that I have found particularly useful in my own study. Others will be discussed through the course of this dissertation, and will subsequently appear in the bibliography. To address the threefold aims set out earlier in this chapter (i.e., to investigate the art songs of Ralph Vaughan Williams before the Great War; to discuss the individual art songs as providing a specific reading of the text/poem set; and to examine those same art songs as emblems of Englishness or English national identity) in an orderly fashion, my study examines the art songs of Vaughan Williams chronologically: Chapter Two, “Early Songs of Dorset” discusses the settings of the poet William Barnes (1901-1903), Chapter Three, “Rogues, Vagabonds, Tramps and Tinkers: The Life of the Wanderer in Songs of Travel” discusses his settings of poetry by Robert Louis Stevenson (1904), and Chapter Four, “On Wenlock Edge,” discusses his settings of Alfred Edward Housman (1909).

The work of several of the aforementioned scholars has informed my own approach to the study of song. In particular, Eric Sams’s meticulous organization
inspired me (and many others) to discuss individual works by explaining the history and circumstance of their composition. Susan Youens’s detailed studies that provide information on both the poet and composer and the texts as well as the music have inspired me to look at the lives of the poets used by Vaughan Williams and to strive to examine the texts as deeply as possible. In the appendix of his book *A Vision of Albion*, Wilfrid Mellers provides a fascinating discussion of Vaughan Williams and musical symbolism in terms of his use of keys and modes.\(^{139}\) Mellers explains that Vaughan Williams most likely did not use musical symbolism consciously, but it does appear consistently throughout the composer’s *oeuvre*.\(^{140}\) I have made use of Mellers examples of Vaughan Williams’s musical symbolism in all the chapters, but primarily in Chapter Three (*Songs of Travel*), where the possible use of musical symbolism appears the most consistent, and briefly in Chapter Four (*On Wenlock Edge*) where Mellers mentions specific connections.\(^{141}\)

The quantity and quality of the discussion of each individual song is determined by its musical and literary content as well as the song’s place within Vaughan Williams’s *oeuvre* and how well it seems to demonstrate Englishness and the construction of English national identity. Therefore, at times the amount of discussion devoted to a given individual song may be uneven.


\(^{140}\) Wilfrid Mellers, *The Vision of Albion*, 366: “It is improbable that Vaughan Williams consciously reflected on the symbolism of key (and mode) which is so elaborately evident in his music, but the consistency of his approach fascinates.”

\(^{141}\) Vaughan Williams does not discuss musical symbolism in any of his extant published or unpublished letters. However, Mellers has provided interesting and compelling conclusions in his book.
CHAPTER 2

EARLY SONGS OF DORSET

In early 1902 Vaughan Williams sent the following letter to his cousin Ralph Wedgewood:

My dear Randolph

You really are magnificent! We were glad to get your letter and are very grateful to the pay-bills for not coming in till 9.15.

I’ve not very much to chronicle except that I’ve sold my soul to a publisher—that is to say I’ve agreed not to sell songs to any publisher but him for 5 years. And he is going to publish several pot boiling songs of mine—that is to say not real pot boilers—that is to say they are quite good—I’m not ashamed of them—as they are more or less simple and popular in character. They are to come out in a magazine called ‘The Vocalist” and then to be published at 1/0—which is a new departure—and I’m to get a penny halfpenny on each copy—so you see I’m on the high road to a fortune.

The “pot boilers” that Vaughan Williams refers to are “Linden Lea” and “Blackmwore [sic] by the Stour,” and later, “The Winter’s Willow.” “Linden Lea,” composed in 1901, was first published in The Vocalist in April 1902 (series no. 2) and was quickly followed by “Blackmwore by the Stour” (composed in 1902), which was published in their September issue (series no. 7). The Vocalist was a musical periodical devoted to the art of singing that began

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142 “Randolph” was a family nickname for Ralph Wedgewood. See Hugh Cobbe, ed. Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895-1958, 8.

143 Hugh Cobbe, ed. Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895-1958, 42.

144 Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 13-15. Note: In his biography of the composer, James Day reports that “Linden Lea” was published in the first issue of The Vocalist. (James Day, Vaughan Williams, 110.) However, there is some confusion surrounding the publication history of The Vocalist (see footnote 3).
publication in April 1902.145 Until it ceased publication in December of 1905, it actively encouraged the composition of new songs. The Vocalist was what Stephen Banfield calls an “Edwardian reaction to the royalty ballad.”146 It was not as highbrow as The Come: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine and Review of Literature, Music, Architecture and the Graphic Arts, a somewhat similar journal that ran from 1897 to 1900,147 but, once The Come had ceased publication, the time was right for a magazine that dealt specifically with singing and which discussed and published new songs.148 The magazine published “Linden Lea” at the recommendation of the composer (and Vaughan Williams’s former professor of music) Charles Villiers Stanford.149 Both “Linden Lea” and “Blackmowre by

145 Regarding the publication of The Vocalist, Stephen Banfield claims that is was a “monthly periodical” that began in April 1902 and ceased publication in December 1905 (Stephen Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 2); yet the “Periodicals” article Grove Music Online has it erroneously listed as a weekly publication (see Imogen Fellinger, et al., “Periodicals,” Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press, Web, 20 May 2013, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.hillsdale.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/21338pg21>). The British Union Catalogue only says it ran from 1902-1905 and spawned 45 numbers, but does not state with what regularity the periodical was published. Forty-five numbers is enough for a regular monthly publication within the timespan Banfield has given us. When he lists Vaughan Williams’s songs published in The Vocalist, Michael Kennedy also includes series numbers (i.e. “Linden Lea” was published as series no. 2 of The Vocalist in April 1902 and “Blackmowre by the Stour” as series no. 7 in September 1902). It appears however that the series numbers refer specifically to the individual songs contained within the periodical, not to new series of the journal. For example, “Linden Lea” was series no. 2 and appeared on pages 13-16 of the April 1902 issue. “A Summer Slumber Song” by George S. Aspinall was series no. 3 and appeared in that same issue on pages 17-20. The Vocalist was active from 1902-1905. No extant source, including the periodical itself, provides an exact date of publication for that first issue other than April 1902.

146 Stephen Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 2.

147 Stephen Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 2.


the Stour” have the subtitle “A Dorset Folk Song” and are both settings of poems by William Barnes (1801-1886), as is “The Winter’s Willow.” This last Barnes setting was published in The Vocalist in November 1903 (series no. 68), and had the subtitle “Song, in a Dorset dialect.”

William Barnes was, at various intervals, an artist, a lawyer’s clerk, an organist and a teacher. Through his own initiative and diligence he became a remarkable linguist, learning throughout his life, Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Welsh, Greek, Hindustani, and Persian. In 1837, long after marrying (1822) and in the middle of raising a family and running a school, and after publishing books like the Etymological Dictionary (London: Shaftesbury and Whittaker, 1829), A Catechism of Government in General and that of England in Particular (Shaftesbury: Charles Bastables, 1833), A Few Words on the Advantages of a

150 In the current published edition of these songs by Boosey & Hawkes, the subtitle of both “Linden Lea” and “Blackmore by the Stour” is “A Dorset Song” although when they first appeared in The Vocalist both had, by way of a subtitle, “A Dorset Folk Song.” There are several possible reasons for the change from “A Dorset Folk Song” to “A Dorset Song.” However the most likely is that since composing these two songs, two significant things happened: 1. Vaughan Williams began actively to collect folksongs himself (in 1903), and 2. the definition of folksong became something specific, i.e. not something composed but something that was handed down orally through generations. Vaughan Williams’s other setting of a William Barnes Dorset dialect poem that was published as series no. 68 (or song number 68) of The Vocalist, “The Winter’s Willow,” currently has the subtitle “A Country Song,” where it used to have the subtitle “Song, in the Dorset dialect.” “The Winter’s Willow” was published in November 1903. (See Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 19.) The distinction between what was considered to be folksong and was considered to be art song brings to mind the discussions occurring in Germany and Austria in and around the time Schubert composed and published “Erlkönig,” op. 1, D.328 (1815). Contemporaries of Schubert were trying to decide if “Erlkönig” was a Gesang or a Lied. The issue even came up surrounding Beethoven’s An die ferne Geliebte, op. 98 (1816). For more information see Christopher Gibbs, “‘Komm, geh’ mit mir’: Schubert’s Uncanny Erlkönig,” Nineteenth-Century Music 13, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 115-135, and Amanda Glauer, “Beethoven’s Songs and Vocal Style,” in The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven, ed. Glen Stanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 186-199. Also something to be noted is that Trevor Hold, in his book Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers, states that Vaughan Williams subtitled both “Linden Lea” and “Blackmore by the Stour” “A Dorset Song” (104). He perhaps missed the original subtitle, which is listed correctly in Michael Kennedy’s Catalogue.

More Common Adoption of the Mathematics as a Branch of Education of Subject of Study (London: Whittaker & Co., 1833), and A Mathematical Investigation of the Principle of Hanging Doors, Gates, Swing Bridges (Dorchester: Simons and Sydenham, 1833), he began formal study at St. John’s College, Cambridge. At that time he was what was referred to as a “ten years man.” Today we would call him a part-time, mature student. In 1850 he finally took his degree of Bachelor of Divinity and subsequently added to his list of occupations the title of clergyman. Through all of this he continued to write poetry.

William Barnes was and continues to be a divisive figure in the field of nineteenth-century English poetry, when he is thought of at all. During Barnes’s lifetime, controversy surrounded his letters and articles published in the Dorset County Chronicle and the Gentleman’s Magazine. These arguments culminated after his 1840 article stated that the Dorset dialect was a purer and more grammatical mode of speech than standard English. This raised eyebrows because his chief function as a schoolmaster was to teach standard English. Additionally, as Burton and Ruthven explain in their article “Dialect Poetry, William Barnes and the Literary Canon,” audiences by and large did (and do) not

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152 Alan Chedzoy’s biography, William Barnes: A Life of the Dorset Poet (Dorset: The Dovecote Press, 1985) provides an excellent (and somewhat humorous) overview of this time in Barnes’s life. See, in particular chapter 5, pp. 81-103. The specific details about Barnes enrolling at Cambridge can be found on pp. 97-98. See also Chedzoy’s biography for a more complete list of Barnes’s prose writings. See in particular pages 58-59 and 189-190.

153 William Barnes, “The Saxon Dialects of Dorsetshire” Gentleman’s Magazine (January 1840): 31. Specifically, Barnes argued that the Dorset dialect was “…purer and more regular than that which has been adopted as the national speech. It was, moreover, a broad, bold, rustic shape of English as the Doric was of the Greek; rich in humour, strong in raillery, powerful in hyperbole, and altogether a fit vehicle of rustic feeling and thought as the Doric is found in the Idyllia [sic] of Theocritus.”
expect dialect poetry to be written by a scholar, and William Barnes was known to be an educated man—he was the headmaster of a school. Also, unlike the poets Tennyson and Hardy, who only occasionally wrote in dialect, Barnes almost always wrote poetry in dialect. Therefore the Victorian reading public could not register amazement at a “country yokel” producing such verse, but rather had to accept that it came from a Cambridge-educated teacher and clergyman from the country who wrote in the language of country people. Forsyth explains it thus:

Barnes is a countryman born and bred and, because his poetry is always about scenes and events and people he knows intimately, it has a quality of authenticity which can be derived only from first-hand experience…It would be false, however, to think of him as an untutored yokel, for he was in fact an educated and well-informed person of wide interests. Besides being a parson and schoolmaster, he was an accomplished linguist, a somewhat eccentric philologist, a competent wood-carver; he dabbled in etymology and archaeology, invented a quadrant and an instrument for describing ellipses, played the flute, violin, and piano, sang and composed songs, and was an expert in Welsh and Persian prosody.

However, he did not have, as Forsyth goes on to explain, “the advantage of being able to demand the admiration of the sympathizing public on the score that he is a chimney-sweep, or a rat-catcher, and has never learned to read.” Since Barnes was an educated man, he did not have what might be termed the cachet of being a savant.


Today, Barnes is seen as a conservative by a left-leaning academy.\(^\text{157}\) He wrote over 800 poems, most of which are in Dorset dialect. He published three volumes of poetry, the first in 1844, followed by the second in 1859 and the third in 1862,\(^\text{158}\) but he has never reached the level of fame that either Alfred Tennyson or Thomas Hardy did, both of who also published poems in dialect.\(^\text{159}\)

Vaughan Williams has a long history of attraction to dialect poets, specifically Tennyson and Hardy in addition to Barnes, even though he only set Barnes’s dialect poetry to music. He also set other, non-dialect works by Tennyson and Hardy. The composer’s first setting of Tennyson occurred during the spring term of 1892 at the Royal College of Music. The unpublished song “Crossing the Bar” for voice and piano,\(^\text{160}\) was followed by another unpublished song for voice and piano, “Winter” (1896), from Tennyson’s “The Window.”\(^\text{161}\)

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\(^{159}\) Tennyson was inspired to write his Linconshire dialect poems after reading Barnes’s. Specifically, Tennyson published his “Northern Farmer” poems after visiting Barnes at Came Rectory. See Alan Chedzoy, *William Barnes: A Life of the Dorset Poet*, 1-2. Likewise Hardy was also influenced by Barnes. This influence is evident in the 150 dialect words Hardy used in his poetry, the nearly 250 archaic or obsolete words he appropriated, and his experimentation with versification and rhyme. For Barnes’s influence on Hardy, see Lloyd Siemens, “Thomas Hardy, William Barnes and the Question of Literary Influence,” *Victorian Review* 19, no 1 (Summer 1993): 43-48, esp. 43. Hardy also has appropriate characters in his novels use dialect. See, for example, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Trumpet Major*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, etc.


\(^{161}\) BL MS 57250. See also Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 5.
In 1899 this was followed by “Caribel” (*Juvenilia*), also for voice and piano. Boosey & Co. published this song in 1906. The composer’s last two Tennyson settings were also songs which, like the Barnes settings, first appeared in *The Vocalist*. Both “Tears, Idle Tears,” which he composed in 1903, and “The Splendour Falls,” composed in 1905, are from Tennyson’s narrative poem *The Princess*.162

Vaughan Williams’s fascination with Hardy began in 1908 when he set part of *The Dynasts* for voice and piano, (published 1909 by Boosey & Co.) as the song “Buonaparty.”163 His next foray into Hardy came in 1950 when he wrote the incidental music for a radio play based on *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The first episode was broadcast on 7 January 1951 and the play was serialized as ten weekly parts.164 The composer revisited *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in 1953 when he wrote the *Prelude on an Old Carole Tune*, based on the incidental music for the radio play.165 That same year he used a text of Hardy’s in part seven of *This Day* (*Hodie*), “The Oxen.”166 Vaughan Williams’s last musical association with Hardy was during the last years of his life while he was working on his ninth symphony (composed 1956-7, revised in 1958).167 The second movement in

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particular references *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, Vaughan Williams’s favorite novel by Hardy.\(^{168}\)

It is not known when exactly the composer discovered the poetry of William Barnes. Vaughan Williams does not mention Barnes in his published or unpublished correspondence, nor is Barnes (or their encounter) mentioned in any of the standard works on the composer. Laura Smyth, librarian of The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, has indicated that Vaughan Williams’s book collection was sold upon the death of his second wife, Ursula Vaughan Williams;\(^{169}\) so it is not possible to determine if the composer owned any books of Barnes’s poetry. The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library does not have any books of Barnes’s poetry in its collection.

William Barnes was born in the Blackmore Vale, which is located in north Dorset, on the border of south Somerset and southwest Wiltshire in southern England, and he lived there for the first eighteen years of his life. The majority of his poems usually reflect the lives of the men and women in Dorset. Thus it seems somewhat remarkable that, by the time he wrote his three volumes of Dorset dialect poems, he had not lived there for twenty-five, forty, and forty-three years respectively. Henry Moule, Vicar of Fordington, and the diarist Francis


169 My most recent correspondence with Laura Smyth, Librarian, The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, was 4 June 2013. Ms. Smyth indicated that the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library has no records of the content of Vaughan Williams’s personal library. She did not indicate if the collection was sold privately without record, or if it was sold at auction and they no longer have the inventory or if the inventory ever existed.
Kilvert even commented on the subject matter and time frame of Barnes’s poetry during a visit to the poet in 1874:

He had left his childhood home in the Blackmore Vale over fifty years previously and yet these poems [the Dorset dialect poems] were full of recollections of those years, of people and places he had known as a boy. Curiously, the forty years he had spent as a schoolmaster in Mere and Dorchester had figured little in the poetry. It is as if his imagination had been untouched by the Victorian years and had remained in earlier England, unshaped by enclosures, industrialization [sic] and the railway.\(^{170}\)

These three volumes of poems, all in Dorset dialect, served to reflect the general beliefs and/or fears of this most interesting man. First, as noted earlier, he believed very strongly that the Dorset dialect was the closest form of pure English (i.e. Saxon English) extant. He felt that the standard English used in the Victorian era was too dependent on Latin, French, and other imported languages.\(^{171}\) Barnes also believed that to know one’s own “pure” language was the only way to really know one’s own culture.\(^{172}\) These beliefs were not typical of the time, particularly

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\(^{172}\) See, for example, his discussion in William Barnes, “On Education in Words and in Things,” *Gentleman's Magazine* 15 (January 1851), 24, also discussed in T. L. Burton and K. K. Ruthven, “Dialect Poetry, William Barnes and The Literary Canon,” 309-341. Alan Chedzoy outlines Barnes’s basic theses as follows: 1. That contemporary Victorian English had become ‘impure’ by the common usage among the middle-classes of words of foreign origin, especially Latin and French. 2. That this alien usage was an impediment to comprehension. Even many of those who employed such expressions did not understand them. He had heard ‘manual’ supposed by some to refer to men. And there were those who, in pronouncing ‘corps’, could not distinguish a platoon from a cadaver. As for the working people, the employment of foreign terms, whether in the pulpit or the classroom, effectively prevented them from understanding much of what was said. 3. That nevertheless, there was a ‘pure’ form of English which all native speakers understood. 4. That ‘pure’ English was derived from Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic origins. If King Alfred’s capital of England had not been moved to London from Winchester, then the Dorset dialect would still be Standard English. 5. That the Dorset dialect was the closest form of modern English to the Anglo-Saxon language from which it was derived. 6. That the Dorset dialect was, therefore, not a debased form of English but a true language, with its own grammar and vocabulary. (See Alan Chedzoy, “Those Terrible Marks of the Beast: Barnes, Hardy and the Dorset Dialect,” *The Hardy Society Journal* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 2008): 50-51.)
for a schoolmaster. In fact, they were so atypical that in 1847 Barnes’s application for the headship of Hardye’s Grammar School was rejected.\textsuperscript{173} To be fair, many of Barnes’s ideas were considered radical at that time. For instance, his school curriculum was considered radical because it was so conservative.\textsuperscript{174}

In studying his poetry and his life, it becomes clear that Barnes was not fond of cities, nor was he happy with the changes that were happening in the countryside, such as the enclosures, which he saw as an encroachment of urban mentality. In short, he was unhappy with the changes to rural living that had resulted from industrialization and urbanization. Barnes was not the only member of his generation to respond to the decline of the countryside. In her book \textit{Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England from 1880-1914} Jan Marsh discusses the phenomenon that was sweeping the nation. Traditionally ambivalent attitudes about the countryside were replaced with attitudes that were far more intense. As Marsh explains, “the visible decline of the countryside prompted a sudden rush of nostalgia for rural life.”\textsuperscript{175} This “nostalgia” existed in the poet William Barnes, but, as will be seen throughout this dissertation, continued throughout Vaughan Williams’s lifetime and affected his music. The Victorian era was a time when people first began cycling, camping, and taking walking holidays.\textsuperscript{176} This was a time of back-to-nature, “Simple Life,” do-it-

\textsuperscript{173} Alan Chedzoy, \textit{William Barnes: A Life of the Dorset Poet}, 123.

\textsuperscript{174} Alan Chedzoy provides an intriguing discussion of this in Chapter Seven of his biography of the poet. See Alan Chedzoy, \textit{William Barnes: A Life of the Dorset Poet}, 123-151.


yourself lifestyles— even communes— and a revival of handcrafts; it was also a
time when artisans were touting pre-industrial skills and artistry.  
R. A. Forsyth explains that Barnes’s attitude and poetry goes beyond the standard Victorian
response to the scientific progress and subsequent urbanization that resulted from the Industrial Revolution.  What one finds in Barnes’s poetry, according to Forsyth, is not so much nostalgia for the countryside, but persistent non-acceptance of any achievements that smacked of “progress”:

It is a byword that the Victorians responded in many different ways to finding themselves on ‘a daring plain’. This diversity indicates not only the complexity of their situation, which resulted from the scientific and industrial revolution that transformed English life during the century, but also the characteristic vigour [sic] of their efforts to disentangle it and comprehend it. Such efforts ranged from Charles Kingsley’s muscular embrace to Matthew Arnold’s fastidious fortification against anarchy. Other Victorians were attracted by the ritualistic fervour [sic] and traditionalism of Newman, the semi-religious enthusiasms of the Pre-Raphaelites, ....

By contrast with these earnest efforts the response of the Dorset poet, Williams Barnes, appears at first sight to be simply a nostalgia for the peace of the ‘good old days’, which it seemed had been replaced almost traumatically by the insecurity of a withered faith and a permeating materialism. Certainly Barnes looked back persistently, both in his poetry and at many other levels in his creative life, to his own youth in the countryside and the rural ethos it typified. I want to suggest, however, that viewed properly within the total complex of his personality, this backward-looking habit of mind, which dictated his particularity of selection and treatment of country life and its virtues, did not result from a sentimental evasion of contemporary issues, but amounted rather to a conscious criticism unwaveringly aimed at those very issues. I think one may go even further by suggesting that Barnes’s work, more especially his poetry constituted a myth of minor though not insignificant proportions and of a thoroughness and consistency to be measured by the graceful strength of his verse. And Barnes’s

177 Jan Marsh, _Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England from 1880-1914_, 34, 139, and 245.
achievement is enhanced in that it stands in direct opposition to progress—which became identified with technical advances and was increasingly regarded, therefore, as mechanically inevitable…178

Barnes’s work is significant in that it rarely mentions, even obliquely, any of the technological advancements that he must have seen and of which he must have been aware.

The Songs

“My Orcha’d in Linden Lea”

‘Ithin the woodlands, flow’ry gleáded,
    By the woak tree’s mossy moot,
The sheenèn grass-bleáded, timber-sheáded,
    Now do quiver under voot;
An’ birds do whissle over head,
An’ water’s bubblèn in its bed,
An’ there vor me the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

When leaves that leätely wer a-springèn
    Now do feäde ‘itin the copse,
An’ painted birds do hush their zingèn
    Up upon the timber’s tops;
An’ brown-leav’d fruit’s a-turnèn red,
In cloudless zunsheen, over head,
Wi’ fruit vor me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Let other vo’k meäke money vaster
    In the aïr o’ dark-room’d towns,
I don’t dread a peevish meäster;
    Though noo man do heed my frowns,
I be free to goo abrode,
Or teäke ageän my hwomeward road
To where, vor me, the apple tree

Do lean down low in Linden Lea.\textsuperscript{179}

“My Orcha’d in Linden Lea”, or “Linden Lea” as Vaughan Williams called it, provides us with a picture of a contented rural life. In the first octet there are flowers blooming in the woodlands, the grass blades are shining under foot, while the birds are singing overhead and the water is bubbling away in a brook in Linden Lea. Within this satisfying picture is also an apple tree that must be full of fruit, because it is leaning down low (line 8). With his choice of poet, his choice of poem, and this first octet in his first published art song,\textsuperscript{180} Vaughan Williams sets the stage for what will come in many of his art songs in the ensuing years. This is an idealistic, optimistic pastoral, a veneration of the countryside.

As a musical composition it even roughly anticipates Ford Madox Hueffer (later known as Ford Madox Ford), in his 1907 book \textit{The Spirit of the People: An Analysis of the English Mind}, when he claims:

\begin{quote}
The shorn woodlands are decked with improbable bouquets of primroses; in the fields amongst the young lambs the daffodils shake in the young winds; along the moist roadides, beneath the quicken hedges, there will be a diaphanous shimmer of cuckoo-flowers….For the Englishmen…they are in the presence of things that \textit{really} matter.\textsuperscript{181}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{180} He composed other arts songs earlier than “Linden Lea,” but they were published later. I am speaking here of “How Can a Tree but Wither?” (composed 1899, published 1934) and “Claribel” (composed 1899, published 1906). See Michael Kennedy, \textit{A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams}, 9.

As noted above, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to be English was to be rural. But the imagery is selective in the poems found in this chapter, and throughout most of the verse discussed in this dissertation. The poems do not necessarily depict the drudgery and hard work of the rural poor, nor do they depict things like the realities of poor living conditions, unwed pregnancies, or the devastation of a bad harvest (or indeed the result of the mechanization of the harvest on the people that depended on the regular money supplied by regular work in the fields). This is English pastoral, but there is no grieving—this is not pastoral as elegy as we find later in the composer’s music in a piece such as the Pastoral Symphony (1921). Vaughan Williams was also careful to choose a poem that identifies a specific place, Linden Lea. It is not merely any rural place, it is a specific rural location. The “Englishness” described by Ford, or the suggestion of more general aspects of English national identity, are further enhanced by identification or association with a specific locale, whether or not that place is real. Ian Baucom explains that “Englishness has been generally

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183 See Brian Short, “Images and Realities in the English Rural Community: An Introduction,” 1-18, esp. 1-5.


185 To my knowledge there is no actual Linden Lea in England. There is a Lindenlea neighborhood in Ottawa, Canada, but it was not established until the Great War and does not apply in this case. The importance of place and place-names will come up again in Chapter Four.
understood to reside within some type of imaginary, abstract, or actual locale, and to mark itself upon that locale’s familiars.”

Vaughan Williams originally set this text in G major (a key Wilfrid Mellers identifies as blessing and benediction in Vaughan Williams’s music) and he followed the form of the poem, that is to say, it is a strophic setting (AAA'). The musical setting of “Linden Lea” strictly follows the octets of Barnes’s “My Orcha’d in Linden Lea,” and the beginning of each A section corresponds to the beginning of each octet in the text. Each section of the song even begins with the same two and a half bar piano interlude with its imitative

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188 In art song literature in general there are discussions and ambiguities about what exactly constitutes a strophic setting. I am using the term “strophic” in the conventional sense where all stanzas of text are set to the same music (with only very slight variation of the music due to the dictates of text setting). Please see *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Strophic,” by Michael Tilmouth, accessed January 16, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/library.hillsdale.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/26981. Harold Skinner noted Vaughan Williams’s particular use of strophic settings and the composer’s adherence to the text, and explained “Vaughan Williams usually deviates from the most simple type of strophic song by including introductions, interludes, and codas, which are realized by the keyboard. He also writes out each individual strophe with minute variations to conform to the varying accents of the texts.” (Harold M. Skinner, “A Study of Ralph Vaughan Williams as a Composer of Songs for Solo Voice” (DMA diss., Northwestern University, 1960), 24-25.) Frank Howes identifies the form of this song is AABA, but this is not the case. (See Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1954), 236-237.) Howes never mentions where the B section starts, but perhaps he considers the change in the accompaniment at measure 41 (coinciding with the beginning of the third octet) its beginning. Presumably then Howes’s last A section would begin in the middle of measure 53, which coincides with the text “To where, vor me, The apple tree/do lean down low in Linden Lea.” (lines 23 and 24—the last of the poem). If this is what Howes meant, the last A section would be incomplete.
entrances of the first four notes that eventually open the vocal melody (see example 2.1).\textsuperscript{189}

Example 2.1 “Linden Lea,” mm. 1-3.

In the second octet the time has moved from spring to fall. Barnes writes of leaves that “leätely wer a-springèn;” it was spring, it is now no longer. Other clues are that these same leaves are fading within the small wood (copse), the birds have stopped singing, and, crucially, the apples are turning red (apples ripen in the fall). By line 15, the penultimate line of the second octet, we know for sure that the tree is full of fruit, and the fruit is for the narrator/farmer alone: “Wi’ fruit \textit{vor me}, the apple tree/Do lean down low in Linden Lea.” (emphasis mine).

In the poignant third octet of “My Orcha’d in Linden Lea” we get to the crux of the poem. In line 17 the poetic voice—in this case the farmer—states that other people may make money faster than he himself does. Indeed, there is no mention of the narrator/farmer making any money at all. He does not sell his apples. The continual refrain is “…\textit{vor me} the apple tree/ Do leän down low in Linden Lea.” (lines 7-8, 15-16 and 23-24, emphasis mine). However, in order to make that money, people must be in town. But as the poem says, the farmer is not

\textsuperscript{189} James Day also notices the imitative entrances. See James Day, \textit{Vaughan Williams}, 110.
in town, and he does not have to dread an irritable boss, nor is he stuck in a dark room all day like the people that work in town. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the city was often constructed in fiction and painting as something desperate and loathsome, something to escape from due to the harsh conditions of employment (see, for example, Elizabeth Gaskell’s novel *North and South* or Dickens’s *Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend*). Marsh explains, “In art and literature, the city came to be depicted as seething with a kind of verminous [sic] activity beneath the high Victorian prosperity, the poor preying on their fellows and the rich waxing complacent.”190 The farmer is also possibly quite alone (line 20: “noo man do heed my frowns,”). However, he is free to come and go as he pleases (“I be free to go abroade/Or teäke ageän my hwomeward road,” lines 22-23), in a way that people in town are not. When he does come home to Linden Lea, he will be fed and sheltered by the apple tree.

The only musical difference between the sections of the song is a change in the piano accompaniment for the third octet. At this point in the text, the farmer/narrator is emphasizing certain facts: other people may make money faster, but they will do so in dark rooms with dank air (i.e., in the city), he does not have to answer to any other master but himself, and he, ultimately, is free to do as he wishes, including being free to roam either abroad or to roam homeward. The poignancy of this octet is intensified by the change in the accompaniment pattern. Prior to this octet, Vaughan Williams had chosen to employ a steady

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stream of eighth notes (with passing notes) in the accompaniment, as can be seen in the piano introduction and interludes as well as in example 2.2, mm. 5-7.

Example 2.2 “Linden Lea,” mm. 5-7.

However, for the third octet he institutes a change. For the text “Let other vo’k meäke money vaster/ in the aïr o’ dark-room’d towns, / I don’t dread a peevish meäster; / Though noo man do heed my frowns, / I be free to goo abrode, / Or teäke ageän my hwomeward road,” (lines 17 through 22), the composer uses blocked chords that follow the rhythm of the vocal line, further emphasizing the text. The idea of making money faster is emphasized by the tempo marking Animato, and by the staccato directions for the chords in the accompaniment. Vaughan Williams also indicates difference between the rural and the urban musically by having the word “towns” (measure 45) harmonized by an deceptive (or interrupted) cadence onto an E minor (vi) chord. (In its comparable position in the previous two verses, the words “moot” as in “mossy moot” in measure 8 and “copse” in measure 26, both elements of a rural environment, are harmonized with a perfect cadence onto a G major chord.) The E minor chord in measure 45 is followed by an F natural in the left hand of the piano and a D in the right. These are neighbor and passing tones or an implied secondary dominant seventh
(onto a C major chord) that shift us out of the secure G major, just as Vaughan Williams has taken the listener out of the realm of the rural. (See example 2.3.)

Example 2.3. “Linden Lea,” mm. 41-45.

This is followed in line 21 (mm. 50 through 52) by the farmer’s energetic claim of the ability to wander: “I be free to go abrode.” Despite the strophic setting, Vaughan Williams is able to enhance this claim via an alteration in the accompaniment (measure 50), which is also playing forte. Here, for the first time, there are rests. The voice is, literally free, singing alone on the word “free” after an initial eighth-note articulation of a C major chord (see example 2.4, mm. 49-53 of “Linden Lea). Marsh explains that:

The return to nature also attracted those for whom the elaborate social system of conventions and proprieties seemed suffocatingly restrictive, preventing the expression of natural feelings and simple pleasures. Clothing, in the late Victorian period, was heavy and formal, furnishings heavy and ornate, food heavy and over-lavish. Social conduct was constrained by codes of behaviour. Respectability ruled, natural emotions were repressed, and the result was unhappiness. The solution, evidently, lay in a voluntary return to a plainer, simpler style of life, based on natural relations and the free expression of emotion. This, too, was more possible in the country than the city.\footnote{Jan Marsh, \textit{Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914}, 5.}
This single word suddenly takes on much greater meaning. The single measure of both eighth-note chords and rests, so unlike the rest of the accompaniment in this song, serves both to emphasize the importance of the freedom of the farmer and his ability to wander, and it inadvertently serves to emphasize another theme that will pervade the later songs of Vaughan Williams. That is the theme of travel, or wandering. This, too, becomes an important theme in the aftermath of industrialization. Here, that textual theme is followed immediately by the narrator’s admission that he was also free to “teāke ageān my hwomeward road” (line 22). Vaughan Williams sets this nostalgically, almost wistfully (mm. 51-52). Both the voice and piano have dropped from their previous loud volumes to pianissimo, the falling vocal line, which is marked poco rallentando, is indicative of ‘going home,’ and Vaughan Williams uses a d minor chord in the accompaniment, taking us away from the security of G major but closer to a sense of nostalgia (see example 2.4).

Example 2.4. “Linden Lea,” mm. 49-53.

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192 See Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914*, 7, 32, 35, 88,
Prior to setting Barnes’s text, Vaughan Williams had already expressed his preference for the English countryside. Two letters, one from 1898 and one from 1902, specifically discuss the composer’s idea of the perfect scenery, including a kind of pleasant small town that met with his approval. The earliest was a letter to his cousin Ralph Wedgewood from a Tuesday in early June 1898, which idealizes a small town in Hampshire and the landscape of the nearby Isle of Wight:

I haven’t yet told you about Lymington—I always imagined that Lymington was a small and unpleasant watering place—but it is in reality a delightful and very sleepy little town which happens to be by the Solent and to look across to the Isle of Wight—here comes in another of my delusions: I always imagined that the Isle of Wight was a gimcracky kind of a place but what we saw of it was a magnificent stretch of downs and white cliffs—Don’t think me degenerate in my likes but you know I always have preferred soft scenery to stern uncomfortable scenery. I can admire it but I can’t really enjoy it. I know that shows a craven spirit but I can’t help it. My heart goes through the same manoeuvres [sic] as Wordsworths [sic] when he saw a rainbow when I see a long low range of hills—I suppose this comes from being born in Surrey S. W. 193

The second letter is again to his cousin, Ralph Wedgewood, from early 1902, and is a continuation of the letter mentioned at the opening of this chapter when he announced to his cousin that he had “sold his soul to a publisher”. 194

I should like to penetrate Middlesbrough and see the factory chimneys— I’m not sure that I like them so much as I used to— my ideal [sic] of scenery at present is a long low valley this sort of shape [curved line]–all arable and ploughed fields—and just one or two trees. 195


194 See page 52.

From this excerpt it appears that Vaughan Williams’s taste was changing. As he explains in the first half of the excerpt, Vaughan Williams was no longer as enamored of the sight of the factory chimneys as he used to be, but his preferred scenery was that of the countryside. Specifically, the composer preferred countryside that displayed the marks of husbandry. Further association with the ‘Back to the Land’ movement can be seen in his own habits of taking cycling and walking holidays. In her biography of the composer, Ursula Vaughan Williams refers several times to his participation in these activities. A few examples are the following: “Ralph had seen it [i.e. Stonehenge] when he was bicycling in the west country,” “The afternoons he usually spent walking or bathing, and this time he collected a few songs in Westerdale and at Robin Hood’s Bay.”; and, lastly:

Gustav’s letter included an invitation to spend the next Sunday walking—a companion activity to their indoor field days, which gave both of them great pleasure. Sometimes they were day walks; sometimes, in holidays, when Holst was free, they would go away and walk for three or four days exploring new country or revisiting favourite places, doing a little mild sightseeing, not making rigid plans but feeling free to follow their fancies. This was entirely to Ralph’s taste; roads were still almost empty of motor traffic, and they took maps, using lanes and trackways whenever possible.

These three examples, which occurred in 1903, 1904, and 1914 respectively, demonstrate a habit of several years in the making, and one that suggests a real affinity with contemporary ideals.

Scholars have offered varied readings of Barnes’s poem which are worth considering. Alan Hertz, in “The Hallowed Pleäces of William Barnes,” reads “My Orcha’d in Linden Lea” slightly differently from the interpretation offered

\[\text{Ursula Vaughan Williams, } R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 65, 66, and 111-112 respectively.\]
above. Hertz sees the apple tree as a biblical harbinger of doom: “This luxurious poetry offers a taste of Paradise; even the name of the farm is like an echo of Eden. But if this is paradise, is not the offer of apples ominous? In any case, is not the solitude oppressive?” Later on Hertz asks “But is this emphatic self-assertion, this total rejection of human community, really enviable?” Hertz seems to be placing his own expectations on this poem. It is true that, as an educated man and as a clergyman, Barnes would have been well aware of the symbolism of the apple, but that does not seem to be what is going on here. In this case an apple tree is a regular apple tree. It symbolizes sustenance and a thriving harvest.

In any case, Vaughan Williams did not respond to the text in this way. He would have been aware of the biblical symbolism of the apple, and indeed, after the Great War he did write art songs that have biblical or religious leanings, but in this particular instance he does not appear to read the poem with a biblical spin. There is nothing in his setting to suggest that the apple tree offers a taste of Paradise with something ominous lurking.

James Day reads this poem as Barnes “underlining the positive aspects of the countryman’s admittedly hard lot—his independence,” which seems a much

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199 Specifically the *Four Poems of Fredegond Shove* (with the exception of “The Water Mill”), and the 1925 version of “Orpheus with his Lute,” where the composer uses a portion of *The Old Hundredth* as part of the piano accompaniment.
closer to the way Vaughan Williams read the poem.\textsuperscript{200} Possibly the most erroneous comment about this poem comes from Frank Howes. In his book \textit{The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams} he states that Barnes “probably, like Burns, took a local song and tidied it up by attending to its rhymes and regularizing its spelling.”\textsuperscript{201} We, of course, know that this is not the case. Barnes was not collecting and arranging local “songs.” He was writing his own poetry in the Dorset dialect.

Vaughan Williams set four of Barnes’s Dorset dialect poems for voice and piano: the three discussed in this chapter and one other, “In the Spring,” which was published by Oxford University Press in 1952. “Linden Lea,” however, holds a special place in Vaughan Williams’s compositional history. It was his first published composition and it remains to this day his most financially lucrative and famous piece.\textsuperscript{202} It has been arranged (by others) for male voice quartet (by Victor Thomas, published in 1921); unaccompanied mixed voices (by Arthur Somervell, published in 1929); mixed voices with piano accompaniment (by Sumner Salter, published in 1929); melody with words only with tonic sol-fa symbols (published in 1931); unaccompanied three-part choir (by Julius Harrison, published in 1938); a French version (for medium voice and piano) (by Lilian Fearn, published ca. 1946); a two-part arrangement with piano accompaniment (by Alec Rowley, published in 1949); for unaccompanied male voices (ttbb) (by

\textsuperscript{200} James Day, \textit{Vaughan Williams}, 110.

\textsuperscript{201} Frank Howes, \textit{The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams}, 236-237.

\textsuperscript{202} Michael Kennedy, \textit{The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams}, 51.
Julius Harrison, published in 1950); for voice with orchestral accompaniment (orchestration by Leo Hawkes, orchestra parts only available for hire); for medium orchestra (no voice) (by Harold Perry, published 1950); for solo piano (by Harold Perry, published 1954); for descant recorder and piano (by Stanley Taylor); and as a Fantasia on ‘Linden Lea’ (for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon) (arr. by Vaughan Williams in 1942-43 for John Parr of Sheffield, manuscript formerly in possession of the late Max Hinrichsen). No other work of Vaughan Williams has been subject to so many arrangements, and no other piece he wrote earned him more money. The fact that this was Vaughan Williams’s most lucrative piece is ironic considering that he was setting a text that discussed in pejorative terms the distressing ways of making money, in contrast to the pleasures of the simple life. Another possible reason for “Linden Lea’s” financial success was its inclusion in the Boosey catalogue. In 1912 Boosey & Co. acquired the plates of “Linden Lea” from Vocalist Co. Ltd., and that same year Boosey & Co. issued the G major version of the song again, under Boosey & Co. publisher’s no. H.7549. By 1912 Boosey & Co. had been running their long-established concert series, the London Ballad Concerts, for forty-five years. Once “Linden Lea” became part

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203 For details, see Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 13-15 and 175. All of these arrangements were published by Boosey & Co. or Boosey & Hawkes with the exception of the arrangement for voice and orchestra (whose parts are for hire only, although through Boosey & Hawkes) and the Fantasia on ‘Linden Lea,’ which was never published.


206 The London Ballad Concerts was a concert series established in 1867 by John Boosey (1832-1893). The concerts first took place at St. James Hall (from 1867-1893), then at Queens Hall when it was built in 1893. (See Grove Music Online, s. v. “Boosey & Hawkes,” by D. J. Blaikley, et al., accessed March 13, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.hillsdale.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/03558.)
of Boosey’s catalogue, it is possible that it joined the repertoire of songs included in the London Ballad Concerts. This concert series continued until 1936. While discussing the change in the types of ballads performed during these concerts over the years, particularly during the Edwardian era, Derek Scott uses “Linden Lea” as an example of one of the prominent types of Edwardian ballads performed during that era (my emphasis). He remarks:

Songs in vernacular speech or dialect form another prominent type of Edwardian ballad. These songs fall into two categories, those purporting to be the expression of the common soldier or sailor, and those sporting a rustic character. The former having their origin in Kipling’s Barrack-Room Ballads…, while the latter show the influence of the Folksong Movement. They may have original music, like Vaughan Williams’ [sic] ‘Linden Lea’, or only the words may be fresh, as in Weatherly’s ‘Danny boy’…

With “Linden Lea” Vaughan Williams set a precedent. He made the decision to set the poem strophically, perhaps to emphasize the “simple life” of the country, even though real life in the country was and is far from simple. This perhaps can be viewed as a musical idealization of the countryside. Even though “Linden Lea” is a strophic song—the vocal line remains the same for each verse—slight alterations were made in the accompaniment to bring out meanings in the text. This is something that the composer continued to do in the remaining Barnes songs that he published in The Vocalist that are discussed in this chapter.

Derek Scott, The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victoiran Drawing Room and Parlour, 203-4. It should be noted that Scott does not say that “Linden Lea” was sung at the Ballad Concerts, he only lists it as an example of a type of ballad that would have been sung. Unfortunately at this point I have yet to establish “Linden Lea’s” presence on a Ballad Concert program. However, its inclusion in the Boosey catalogue would have most likely boosted the song’s sales.
“Blackmware Maidens”

The primrose in the sheâde do blow,
The cowslip in the zun,
The thyme upon the down do grow,
The clote where the streams do run;
An, where do pretty maidens grow
An’ blow, but where the tow’r
Do rise among the bricken tuns,
In Blackmware by the Stour.

If you could zee their comely gait,
An’ pretty feäces’ smiles,
A-trippèn on so light o’waight,
An’ steppèn off the stiles;
A-gwaïn to church, as bells do swing
An’ ring ‘ithin the tow’r,
You’d own the pretty maidens’ pleace
Is Blackmware by the Stour.

If you vrom Wimborne took your road,
To Stower or Paladore,
An’ all the farmers’ housen show’d
Their daughters at the door;
You’d cry to bachelors at hwome—
“Here, come: ‘ithin an hour
You’ll vind ten maidens to your mind,
In Blackmware by the Stour.”

An’ if you look’d ‘ithin their door,
To zee em in their pleäce,
A-doèn housework up avore
Their smilèn mother’s feäce;
Ou’d cry—“Why, if a man would wive
An’ thrive, ‘ithout a dow’r,
Then let en look en out a wife
In Blackmware by the Stour.”

As I upon my road did pass
A school-house back in May,
There out upon the beaten grass
Were maidens at their pla’y;
An’ as the pretty souls did tweil
An’ smile, I cried, “The flow’r
O’beauty, then, is still in bud
In Blackmwere by the Stour.”

As noted above, “Blackmwere by the Stour,” Vaughan Williams’s setting of Barnes’s poem “Blackmwere Maidens,” was the second of his songs to appear in *The Vocalist*, in 1902. Michael Kennedy thinks it likely that it was composed in 1901. Unlike “My Orcha’d in Linden Lea,” Vaughan Williams does not set the entirety of the poem; he only sets the first four quatrains.

In the text William Barnes is clearly venerating his childhood home, the Blackmore Vale, and the pretty girls one can find there. We know it is spring and we know about the landscape because the poet clues us in via the flora he refers to in the first quatrain of the first octet. Primrose, cowslip and clote are all yellow blooms; primrose grows in woods and hedges, cowslip is a wild plant that blooms early (in spring), and clote is a kind of water lily. In the remainder of the first octet, Barnes tells us of other beauties of Blackmwere, which he then proceeds to describe in the second: the lovely maidens of marriageable age. Barnes expounds their virtues, and they are many: they have a beautiful way of walking, pretty smiles, they are light on their feet, and they go to church. In the third and fourth octet (the remaining octets that Vaughan Williams sets), Barnes further explains there is not a better place to look for a wife, provided one does not expect a dowry (“Why, if a man would wive/An’ thrive, ‘ithout a dow’r/Then let en look en out a

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210 This will not be the last time during his career that Vaughan Williams omits part of a poem. The most famous occurrence will be discussed in chapter 4, and, of course, we will see that he omits part of “The Winter’s Willow.”
wife/In Blackmwore by the Stour,” lines 29 to 30), implying, like “My Orcha’d in Linden Lea,” that people in Blackmwore are poor.

Vaughan Williams set the text strophically, but with a particular twist: while the vocal line repeats through the song, the piano accompaniment comes in two sections: one for the first and second verses (to correspond with the first and second octets) and another for the third and fourth verses (to correspond to the third and fourth octets), that is to say, AAA'A'. Vaughan Williams set the song in E major (which Mellers explains is paradisal and “comparatively rarely attained”\(^\text{211}\)). Because of the strophic nature of the piece, the listener will not hear the streams run, nor the bells of the church in the piano part. The primrose, cowslip, thyme, and clote are not obviously depicted in the melodic line, since, in this strophic setting, these rather picturesque words would also have to correspond with words/phrases like “you could,” “pretty,” “trippèn,” and “steppen.”

Vaughan Williams uses the tempo marking Allegretto con moto, and he sets the song in 6/8. Both the voice and accompaniment begin each verse with a V-I motion, with the tonic being the emphasis on the downbeat. The vocal line primarily outlines the tonic triad of E major with the inclusion of passing tones and the inclusion of a D-natural (and D minor harmony in the piano that suggests a fleeting Mixolydian flavor). Also, the piano accompaniment always articulates a chord on the two main beats of the measure. When the voice and piano enter together, the voice is mezzo-forte and the piano is marked piano, and it takes a few measures for the piano to play anything more than chords on the main beats.

\(^\text{211}\) Wilfred Mellers, A Vision of Albion, 365.
The piano never reaches a *forte* unless playing the introduction or interlude. It very much takes a secondary role—this is not meant to be a “chamber music” collaboration of equals, in which the piano comments on the text. It is as if the composer uses the modified strophic setting and the style of accompaniment audibly to depict the idea of the simple pastoral life. (See example 2.5.)

**Example 2.5. “Blackmore by the Stour,” mm. 6-9.**

The harmonies Vaughan Williams uses in Example 2.5 are interesting (I-vi-iii-I-bVII-IV-V7-I). To have the submediant, a weak pre-dominant, resolve to an even weaker pre-dominant (the mediant) is unexpected, and to include in the same passage a borrowed chord from the parallel minor, the D major harmony, is interesting indeed. Perhaps the unexpected chord sequence can be read as the musical representation of the unexpected beauties found in Blackmore by the Stour, both flora, fauna and human. Or perhaps the combination of steady, 6/8 rhythm (felt in two main beats) with a slightly odd harmonic sequence was Vaughan Williams’s perception of what a folksong *should* sound like.

While Vaughan Williams composed this piece before he began collecting actual folksongs in December of 1903, he was not completely unaware of their existence or what they sounded like. Among the friends of the Vaughan Williams
and Wedgwood families near Leith Hill where the composer grew up were the Broadwoods of Lyne. In 1843 John Broadwood had published a volume of songs that he collected from the country people in Sussex and Surrey, and his daughter Lucy, a personal friend of the composer, added to that collection in 1889 and published an edition titled *Sussex Songs* (with harmonies by H. F. Birch Reynardson). Lucy Broadwood had also published another volume of folksongs, *English Country Songs*, which she had collected in collaboration with J. A. Fuller Maitland, in 1893. These collections, as well as an early childhood book of carols put out by Stainer and Bramley called *The Cherry Tree Carol*, made an impression on the composer.212 The composer’s knowledge of these volumes, coupled with the style of the poetry, may have inspired him to compose the song in the manner of a folk tune. According to Michael Kennedy, “Blackmware by the Stour” was described in *The Times* as the “cleverest imitation of a genuine folk song.”213

The rural setting (with the careful mention of the flora and fauna), the farmers, the country activities (“steppën off the stiles,” “agwaën to church,” etc.), coupled with this particular setting make this art song a musical depiction of what Jan Marsh refers to as the “Simple Life.”214 As we have seen, after the formality and repression of the late Victorian period, retreating to nature or taking comfort

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in rural activities and a simpler way of life was highly sought after.\textsuperscript{215} Barnes was a Victorian for much of his adult life and his poetry was written during the Victorian era, but as I have already explained, the “nostalgia” for this way of life already existed in his poetry and indeed in his life. Vaughan Williams was a Victorian for the first twenty-nine years of his life, but “Blackmware by the Stour” was composed on the cusp of a new era. That Vaughan Williams chose to set poems, like “My Orcha’d in Linden Lea” and “Blackmware Maidens,” in Dorset dialect (what Marsh refers to as “rustic speech”) also suggests he was trying to create, through music, the dream of the simple life.\textsuperscript{216} Barnes’s reluctance to include some of the messier aspects of rural living helped the idealization of this life, this optimistic pastoral. As is explained in Back to the Land, country people were often depicted in literature or viewed (by city dwellers) as good tempered, quaint, hard working, veritable “Hodges.”\textsuperscript{217} From this perspective, the country people led an enviable life, not being tied to the confines of the city life and all it entailed.

“Blackmware by the Stour,” like “Linden Lea,” is a song that mentions a specific place. In a time when so many people had moved to urban areas and nostalgia for the countryside was running high, it became more and more important to establish a link with a particular place in the country, whether that place was a former family residence, or was a place with which one wished to

\textsuperscript{215} Jan Marsh, Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914, 5.

\textsuperscript{216} Jan Marsh, Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914, 62-67.

\textsuperscript{217} Jan Marsh, Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914, 62-67, esp. 62. “Hodge” was a general, somewhat pejorative, term used for a country person, usually a male. In America today, a similar, equally pejorative term might be “bumpkin” or “yokel”.

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establish a connection. In Chapter Four I argue that it was partly the sense of belonging to a place or particular region that made A. E. Housman’s poetry, and subsequently Vaughan Williams’s settings of it, so popular. While neither Barnes’s poetry nor Vaughan Williams’s settings ever became as well known as Housman’s (with the exception of Vaughan Williams’s setting of “Linden Lea”), the concept of place-name association remains relevant.

As mentioned earlier, the piano accompaniment comes in two parts: one for the first and second verses (the first and second octet) and another for the third and fourth verses (the third and fourth octet). (Compare the accompaniment in example 2.6, mm. 6-9, with example 2.7, mm. 27-30,) The accompaniment for the third and fourth octet is the same until beat six of measure 58 (i.e., the pick-up to the last eight measures of the piece) when the left hand does not join the right in playing an eighth note pick-up; the accompaniment then continues for the remainder of the piece to emphasize the E major tonic after the articulation of the subdominant chord on beat one of measure 59. In the comparable measures (that correspond to verse 3 in the text; mm. 27 to 47), the chordal harmony is more varied (bVII on the pick-up to measure 41, then IV, V\(^7\), I, I\(_6\), IV, I, I\(_6\), I).

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219 Please see Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914*, 31-32, for further discussion of this concept.
Example 2.6: “Blackmwore by the Stour”, mm. 6-9.

Example 2.7: “Blackmwore by the Stour”, mm. 27-30.

In the poem, the first and second octets deal primarily with the natural surroundings of Blackmwore by the Stour, i.e., the flora and fauna, the stream, the church building, and the stiles that people have to walk over, and the general idea that this is where pretty maidens “grow.” In the third and fourth octets, however, the focus of the text changes and they seem to advertise the qualities of the maidens of Blackmwore by the Stour as potential wives, provided a man does not expect a dowry (they are pretty, they do housework, they bring a smile to their mother’s face). This shift in purpose surely accounts for the change in accompaniment. The accompaniment for the first two verses does incorporate a few mediant and submediant chords in the overwhelmingly tonic, dominant,
subdominant-based accompaniment part. While the piano stays away from the mediant and submediant in the third and fourth verses, it compensates by having more eighth-note movement in the left hand. (See example 2.7.) This is perhaps due to the shift in subject matter—it is at this point that Barnes is explaining that bachelors could find wives at this location. Perhaps the greater movement in the accompaniment and the less adventurous harmonic language corresponds simultaneously to the excitement of meeting members of the opposite sex (the eighth-note movement) and the idea of getting married and settling down (the less adventurous harmony – mm. 27-66).

Beat six of measure 58, the pickup to the last eight measures of the piece (part of the fourth octet), signals the change of several things: the accompaniment alters here and is different from its corresponding measures in the third octet; in measure 60 the composer instructs the performers *sempre rall. sin al fine* while the right hand of the piano moves primarily in eighth notes; and in measure 62 the vocal line changes by extending the length of the last three notes. Of course, the most convenient argument for these changes is that the piece is ending and Vaughan Williams needed an accompaniment that signaled the conclusion of the piece. (See example 2.8, which compares “Blackmwo by the Stour” mm. 37 through 42, its corresponding measures in the third octet, with example 2.9 mm. 59 through 66.)
Example 2.8. “Blackmwere by the Stour,” mm. 37-42.

Also, at the end of verses one to three, the voice ends forte, followed by five measures (plus pick-up) of piano interlude, the first part of which is forte, the second of which is a piano echo. In the last verse Vaughan Williams does not end
with the now-typical volume and piano interlude. The focus is on the voice, which has gone from \textit{forte} to \textit{pianissimo}, and has been getting increasingly slower over the last few measures and the continuation of a strong tonic pedal for the last seven and a half measures. (See example 2.9.) The crescendo, the continual slowing, and the tonic pedal all emphasize the importance of what is said here: if you do not mind a wife without a dowry, then look for one in Blackmwnore by the Stour! The move from \textit{forte} to \textit{pianissimo} adds to the meaning: either the speaker is moving away from the town (perhaps indicating that the speaker is disillusioned with Blackmwnore and what it had to offer), or the location, once spouted so brazenly, is now going to be kept secret. This also plays into Vaughan Williams’s musical symbolism discussed by Mellers. The key of E major indicates paradise, but paradise that is not easily attained.\(^{220}\)

The conclusion of “Blackmwnore by the Stour” creates something of the \textit{niente} ending that would later become one of the composer’s hallmarks, as the music moves from \textit{piano} to \textit{pianissimo} and the chords fade away. This “dying away” ending-becomes prevalent throughout Vaughan Williams’s art song composition, often to emphasize the meaning of the text. He does not always use the term \textit{niente}, but the technique is there nonetheless. (For example, we find vestiges of the technique in “The Vagabond,” “Let Beauty Awake,” “Youth and Love,” “In Dreams” and “Whither Must I Wander” from \textit{Songs of Travel} (1904), “On Wenlock Edge,” “Is my Team Ploughing?,” “Oh, When I was in Love with You,” “Bredon Hill,” and “Clun” from \textit{On Wenlock Edge}; “Take, O Take” and

\(^{220}\) See Mellers discussion in Wilfrid Mellers, \textit{The Vision of Albion}, 365.
“When Icicles Hang by the Wall” from *Three Songs from Shakespeare* (1925),
“Nocturne” and “A Clear Midnight” from *Three Poems by Walt Whitman* (1925),
“Motion and Stillness” (where the composer actually writes *niente* in the score rather than just indicate it musically and via dynamic markings), and “Four Nights,” “The New Ghost” and “The Water Mill” from *Four Poems by Fredegond Shove* (1925).

Vaughan Williams did not set the fifth and final octet of Barnes’s poem, and one is bound to ask why. Vaughan Williams never discussed this song in any of the published or unpublished letters, so there is no way of knowing why he did not set the last octet. However, the last eight lines of the poem contain a bittersweetness, a hint of sadness, that is not evident in the earlier verses. Perhaps the composer felt that in a strophic setting that was, on the whole, so cheerful, a bittersweet octet would simply not have fit.

“The Winter’s Willow”

(1) There Liddy zot beside her cow,
    Upon her lowly see, O;
A hood did auverhang her brow
    Her païl wer’ at her veet, O;
An’ she wer’ kind, an’ she wer’ feäir,
    An’ she wer’ young, an’ free o’ ceäre;
Vew winters had a-blown her heäir,
    Beźide the Winter’s Willow.

[She werden rear’d ‘ithin the town,
    Where many gayer lass, O,
Do trip a-smilen up an’ down,
    So peale wi’ smoke an’ gas, O’
But here, in vields o’ greazen heards,
    Her vaice ha’ mingled sweetest words
Wi’ evenen charms o’ busy birds,
Bezide the Winter's Willow

An' when, at laste, wi' beaten breast,  
I knock'd avore her door, O,  
She ax'd me in to teake the best  
O' pleaces on the vloor, O;  
An' smilen feair avore my zight,  
She blush'd bezide the yoller light  
O' bleazen bran's, while winds o' night  
Did sheake the Winter's Willow.]

(3) An' if there's readership in her smile,  
She don't begrudge to speare, O,  
To somebody, a little while,  
The empty woaken chair, O;  
An, if I've luck upon my zide,  
Why, I do think she'll be my bride  
Avore the leaves ha' twice a-died  
Upon the Winter's Willow.

(2) Above the coach-wheels' rollèn rims  
She never rose to ride, O,  
Though she do zet her comely lim's  
Above the mare's white zide, O;  
But don't become too proud to stoop  
An' scrub her milkèn-pail's white hoop,  
Or zit a-milkèn where do droop,  
The wet-stemm'd Winter's Willow.

[An' I've a cow or two in leäze,  
Along the river-zide, O,  
An' pails to zet avore her knees,  
At dawn, and evenen tide, O;  
An there she still mid zit, an' look  
Athirt upon the woody nook  
Where vu'st I zeed her by the brook,  
Bezide the Winter's Willow.

Zoo, who would heed the treeless down,  
A-beat by all the storms, O,  
Or who would heed the busy town,  
Where vo'k do goo in zwarms, O,  
If he wer' in my house below  
The elems, where the vire did glow  
In Liddy's feace, though winds did blow
Agean the Winter’s Willow.\textsuperscript{221}

“The Winter’s Willow” was the third Barnes setting that Vaughan Williams published in The Vocalist.\textsuperscript{222} As noted above, it appeared as series number 68 in November of 1903.\textsuperscript{223} There are a few things that immediately set it apart from the two poems previously set. First, Vaughan Williams calls this, by way of subtitle, “Song, in Dorset Dialect,” not “A Dorset Folk Song” or even “A Dorset Song.”\textsuperscript{224} This is a distinct change from his earlier songs published in The Vocalist (both of which bore the designation “A Dorset Folk Song”) and it was most likely due to his own new awareness of English folksong. In addition to being familiar with the collecting work of the Broadwoods,\textsuperscript{225} in the winter of 1902 Vaughan Williams gave a lecture at the Technical School at Pokesdown in Bournemouth titled “The Importance of Folk Song.”\textsuperscript{226} Then, he gave a series of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[221] William Barnes, Poems in Dorset Dialect (Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1864), 131-133. I have included Barnes’s poem in its entirety, although Vaughan Williams only set three octets, and in a different order. The octets set and their order are indicated by numbers in parenthesis prior to the relevant octet. The octets that are bracketed were not set by the composer. This 1864 edition of Barnes’s poetry does not contain the accents usually associated with his Dorset dialect poems. I have included them on the octets that Vaughan Williams set.

\item[222] Roger Savage, in his article “‘While the Moon Shines Gold’: Vaughan Williams and Literature: an Overview,” lists Williams Barnes and “Linden Lea” and “Blackmore by the Stour” in what he calls the ‘First Circle.’ I.e., those writers who died before 1890 and had literary connections to the composer. Interestingly he does not include “The Winter’s Willow.” I mention this only because it is an oddity and Savage is usually so thorough. See Roger Savage, “‘While the Moon Shines Gold’: Vaughan Williams and Literature: an Overview,” 62.


\item[224] See footnote 8. It is now published with the subtitle “A Country Song”. Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The Winter’s Willow: A Country Song” in Ralph Vaughan Williams Song Album Volume 1 (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1985), 44-47. It was originally published in The Vocalist with the subtitle “Song, in Dorset Dialect.” I am not sure why the Dorset label was dropped or even if it was Vaughan Williams’s decision to drop it. There is no mention of dropping or changing the subtitle in the extant letters.

\item[225] Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 62.

\item[226] Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 63.
\end{footnotes}
lectures as part of the Oxford University Extension lectures. This lecture series was titled “History of Folksong” and Vaughan Williams presented the talks in Gloucester on Mondays and Brentwood on Wednesdays, from January to April 1903. It was also in 1903 that Vaughan Williams began to actively collect folksongs himself. It seems highly likely that it was his growing knowledge of folksong that led him to choose a different subtitle for his third musical offering to the magazine despite its similarity to the previous two publications in the same venue (i.e., same poet, the text is in the Dorset dialect, and its rural subject matter).

In “The Winter’s Willow” Barnes makes no reference to place at all, unlike “Linden Lea” and “Blackmowre by the Stour.” However, throughout the poem he continues to capitalize Winter’s Willow, indicating that perhaps this is a very particular tree that has its own name (and therefore indicating a specific location). The rural subject matter is clear from the text: Liddy, who is young and carefree, milks her cow beside the Winter’s Willow. She has never ridden in a coach (although she has ridden a mare), and she is not too proud to scrub her own milk pail or share the oak chair. In addition to being cheerful, she is hard-

\[\text{227} \quad \text{Sue Cubbin, ‘That Precious Legacy’: Ralph Vaughan Williams and Essex Folksong (Essex: Essex Record Office, 2006), 7.} \]

\[\text{228} \quad \text{The composer’s first experience in folksong collecting occurred at a Parish Tea in Ingrave on 3 December 1903. Vaughan Williams met Mr. Pottipher at the Tea, and the next day (4 December 1903) Mr. Pottipher sang “Bushes and Briars” for the Vaughan Williams—the first folksong the composer ever collected. See Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 66.} \]

\[\text{229} \quad \text{Vaughan Williams does not maintain the capitalization of “Winter’s Willow” throughout the song.} \]
working and she does not seem to aspire to marry above her station ("Above the coach-wheels’ rollèn rims / She never rose to ride, O"). The narrator of the poem is expounding her virtues because he will feel lucky if she will agree to be his bride. This description makes for a pleasant, idyllic, idealistic country scene—another example of an optimistic pastoral.

“The Winter’s Willow” was originally published in F major, but reissued by Boosey & Co. in 1914 and currently published in A-flat major. Vaughan Williams set this song very much like “Linden Lea” and “Blackmvore by the Stour.” The vocal line is strophic; the only changes that occur are slight, and they are rhythmic in order to accommodate syllable changes or prosody, aside from the quarter note pickup to the second and third octets (AA’A’). The main distinction between the verses lies in the accompaniment. After a two-bar introduction, the first verse (which introduces Liddy) is accompanied primarily by chords of half- and quarter- note duration. (See example 2.10.) The second verse is set to an accompaniment of almost entirely running eighth notes, perhaps to allude to coach wheels (even though Liddy has never ridden the coach), or the mare (which she has). (See example 2.11.)

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Example 2.10. “The Winter’s Willow,” mm. 3-5.

Example 2.11. “The Winter’s Willow,” mm. 21-23.

In the first verse Liddy’s charms become more musically interesting when Vaughan Williams introduces a raised fourth scale degree (the D natural) into the harmony for the first time when describing her attributes and attitude (mm. 11-14, with the text “An’ she wer’ kind, an’ she wer’ feäir, / A’ she wer’ young, an’ free o’ ceäre”). Because the piano accompaniment is piano against a mezzo piano vocal line, and both times the D natural appears in the first verse it is in an inner voice of the accompaniment or on a weak beat, it is not overwhelming. (See example 2.12.) However, it could be said to lend a slight modal feel to the last

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four lines of the first verse (or it could simply be a V of V—a passing modulation to E-flat) and it sets the description of Liddy herself apart from the description of the scene. More poignantly, the fact that Liddy is young is brought out by the use of a V of vi chord, held by a fermata on a half note (m. 16). (See example 2.12.)


When setting Liddy’s “comely lim’s,” which would be exciting for a suitor to contemplate, Vaughan Williams once again uses a raised fourth scale degree (D natural) in the accompaniment, which, as before, could still be read as a moment of modality since the composer continues to use D naturals and alternates them with the expected D-flats of the tonal center throughout the remainder of the song. However, in this case Liddy’s lovely limbs are musically enhanced with a
secondary dominant (m. 26, V of V), a moment of musical excitement to match the enticement for the suitor. (See example 2.13.)


The last verse, “An’ if there’s readership in her smile, / She don’t begrudge to speare, O, / To somebody, a little while, / The empty woaken chair, O;” is set in blocked chords of half-note duration (see example 2.14).


It could be argued after the activity of the second verse (riding the mare, scrubbing the milk pails), which was exemplified by the running eighth notes of the accompaniment (second half of measure 20 through 37), that Vaughan Williams used the blocked half-note chords here to represent the relative stillness
and solidity of the third verse. That is to say, he used the half-note chords to represent the understanding or sensibility or reason (i.e. “readership” in Dorset dialect) of someone willing to spare a chair (“An’ if there’s readership in her smile, / She don’t begrudge to speare, O, / To somebody, a little while, / The empty woaken chair, O;”). The narrator is full of hope as he contemplates Liddy being his bride, and Vaughan Williams makes the listener understand that the answer will be yes. Moving from an implied diminished seven of V chord, the composer uses fermatas to hold the word “bride” on a dominant seventh chord that unfolds via eighth notes. (See example 2.15.) There is no worry here. The piece ends in a root position tonic A-flat major chord—a whole note held with a fermata no less. The narrator merely wants to marry his bride before the leaves “ha’ twice a-died / Upon the winter’s Willow.”

Example 2.15. “The Winter’s Willow,” mm. 48-49.

“The Winter’s Willow” and “Blackmwore by the Stour” both involve courtship. In the verses set in “Blackmwore by the Stour” the narrator is expounding the virtues of the local maidens for bachelors looking for wives, and in “The Winter’s Willow” the narrator explains why (if he is lucky) Liddy will be his bride. By the time Vaughan Williams set these texts he had been married to
his first wife, Adeline (née Fisher), for at least five years (they married on 9 October 1897). So he was not contemplating courtship himself, but perhaps these texts reminded him of his own courtship, of which very little is known.

“The Winter’s Willow” was never as financially lucrative as “Linden Lea,” and it does not have the cheeky charm of “Blackmware by the Stour” despite the fact that it shares some similar features with those two songs, i.e. Dorset dialect text by William Barnes, the rural setting, and the strophically-set vocal line. Likewise, it does not have that extra something that had made “Linden Lea” so popular.

Michael Kennedy mentions “The Winter’s Willow” briefly while discussing some of the composer’s Christina Rossetti settings. He suggests that the song fails because of its accompaniment. Arguably there is more than one element that makes “The Winter’s Willow” a less successful song than its two predecessors, even if not necessarily a failure. Even though Vaughan Williams was certainly aware of folksong when he was composing “Linden Lea” and “Blackmware by the Stour,” he was not quite at the point where he was studying


233 Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 36, and Hugh Cobbe, ed., Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895-1958, 14 and 16. See in particular the composer’s letter to Ralph Wedgwood dated just after 10 June 1897 (pp. 14) and his letter to his Aunt Laura Vaughan Williams dated July 1897 (pp. 16). Their families were long time friends, since the composer’s father and uncles had known Herbert Fisher at Christchurch. The Fishers had taken summer houses in Surrey (not far from Dorking), and therefore Vaughan Williams had known Adeline for years before she “agreed to marry him,” as he put it. It would be another quarter of a century (1937) before he met Ursula Wood (later Ursula Vaughan Williams) and before they began their affair, so those particular romantic feelings are not coming into play here. However, in an interview with Ursula Vaughan Williams in 1996, she did reveal that the composer was a notorious flirt and very much enjoyed the company of women. However, she did not say when his flirting began, since as a younger man she also described him as being quite shy. (Interview with the author, June 1996.)

it seriously. After this set of songs, i.e. after he started collecting folksongs himself, he never again wrote art songs in the manner of folksongs. The only other text he set by William Barnes was in 1952. It was a poem entitled “In the Spring” from Barnes’s collection *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*, and it had the subtitle “Song for voice and pianoforte.” It is an art song with no reference to the folksong tradition. After Vaughan Williams began collecting folksongs in 1903 he incorporated actual folksongs into some of his compositions, but that is quite a different thing.235 “The Winter’s Willow” was written in the midst of the composer’s change of perspective.

Also, Vaughan Williams does not set four of the octets of “The Winter’s Willow,” but his reason for not setting them is not as clear as his choosing to exclude a verse of “Blackmowre Maidens.” In not setting that stanza, the composer missed the opportunity of exploiting the “town versus country” argument. Also, the text Vaughan Williams does not set lists what the narrator does have, thereby explaining why Liddy might want to choose him over another man, and in providing that list the text furthers the connection with the countryside: a cow or two and pails to set before her (“An’ I’ve a cow or two in leäze, / Along the river-zide, O, / An’ pails to zet avore her knees, / At dawn, and evenen tide, O;”). Additionally, Vaughan Williams chose a poem with no specific place-name. Lack of a place-name is, admittedly, a tiny point. However, as will become clear in Chapter Four, identification with a specific place (real or imaginary) became very important in the first half of the twentieth century. Also,

235 At this time no folksongs or folksong fragments have been identified in any of Vaughan Williams’s art songs.
place association, or, more accurately, the “evocation of place” is an important aspect of musical Englishness.  

The Barnes songs that Vaughan Williams published in *The Vocalist* between 1901 and 1903 are some of the most influential of his career—perhaps not for the listening public, but for the composer himself. With the publication of these songs, Vaughan Williams (purposefully or not) set up his career as a composer with very specific associations: Englishness.

The subject matter of the texts he chose mirrored many of those that he would end up choosing throughout the remainder of his career: the conflict between rural and urban; the celebration of local, rural (country) activities; the glory and freedom of the open road (the beginning of the wanderer trope); the beauty of the countryside; and the veneration of England in the use of its place-names. The conflict between the rural and the urban shows up in the Housman cycle, *On Wenlock Edge*, in the title song specifically, and that entire cycle is full of place names. It is also a celebration of local places and rural activities. The glory and freedom of the open road, combined with the beauty of the countryside is readily apparent in the Stevenson cycle *Songs of Travel*, and celebration of the local and rural activities abound the other Housman cycle *Along the Field*, in

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“When Icicles Hang by the Wall” from *Three Songs from Shakespeare*, and “The Water Mill” from *Four Poems by Fredegond Shove*.

Musically in the Dorset songs we begin to see Vaughan Williams use the accompaniment to depict elements in the text—even using the strophic settings as a commentary on the simple life depicted in the text. We also see the beginnings of certain hallmarks of the composer’s later years, like the *niente* ending in “Blackmware by the Stour,” an ending that is now synonymous with the work of Vaughan Williams.237

In Chapter One I mentioned two scholars, Foreman and Frogley, who had attempted to identify certain elements that determine “Englishness” in early twentieth-century music.238 The first element on Foreman’s list is folk material—folk song, folk dances. While not being actual folksongs themselves, in attempting to write art songs in the style of Dorset folksongs, “Linden Lea” and “Blackmware by the Stour” can certainly count as “folk material” in spirit. Even “The Winter’s Willow” might pass as “A Country Song”, particularly considering its subject matter, use of Dorset dialect, strophic setting, and style of accompaniment. The last item on Foreman’s list is evocation of place. Obviously, “Linden Lea” and “Blackmware by the Stour” fit the bill. As previously discussed, “The Winter’s Willow” does not mention any place names;

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238 See the list provided by Louis Foreman and further discussion by Alain Frogley on pages 44-46 of Chapter One of this dissertation, Lewis Foreman, “National Musical Character: Intrinsic or Acquired?,” 75 and Alain Frogley, “Constructing Englishness in Music: National Character and the Reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams,” 5.
however within the poem the tree is always capitalized, giving it special importance, perhaps indicating a particular tree in a particular location. (In Vaughan Williams’s setting, though, he does not capitalize the name of the tree.) In each song, though, the scene is clearly set, and the optimistic pastoral scenes play into the anti-industrial feelings that were building at the time. Frogley states that the qualities most associated with [English] national identity are to be seen in the countryside.²³⁹

These three early songs, from the start of Vaughan Williams’s compositional career (and particularly “Linden Lea”), are often mentioned in books about the composer and his works. Stephen Banfield, James Day, Percy Young, Frank Howes and Hubert Foss have all discussed them, with Banfield’s work being the most extensive.²⁴⁰ However, none of them discusses these songs as the start of compositional elements that remain with Vaughan Williams throughout his career. That is to say, none of them examine the works in light of Vaughan Williams’s engagement with anti-industrialism, the “Back to the Land” movement, wanderer tropes, non-elegiac pastoral, and landscape/place identity, all of which show up in his later songs, particularly those written before the Great War.

²³⁹ Alain Frogley, “‘Getting its History Wrong’: English Nationalism and the Reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams,” 150.

CHAPTER 3

ROGUES, VAGABONDS, TRAMPS AND TINKERS: THE LIFE OF THE WANDERER IN SONGS OF TRAVEL

1904 is the year we associate with one of Vaughan Williams’s most popular and most often performed song cycles, Songs of Travel, because 1904 is the year that the first eight songs, in the order which Vaughan Williams intended, were sung for the first time at the Bechstein Hall in London.\(^{241}\) However, not all of the songs were written in 1904—some were completed earlier. Of all Vaughan Williams’s song cycles, Songs of Travel (to texts by R L. Stevenson, 1850-1894) has the most convoluted composition and publication history.\(^{242}\) The first song of the cycle to be composed and published was “Whither must I wander” (number 7 in the final sequence). It was, coincidentally, also the first poem of Stevenson’s collection, Songs of Travel and Other Verses, to be published. In this case, it was printed along with Stevenson’s obituary in the Pall Mall Gazette (1894).\(^{243}\) Vaughan Williams’s setting of this text appeared in a magazine called The Vocalist in June 1902.\(^{244}\) So the composition of the cycle spanned the years 1902 to 1904.

\(^{241}\) Indeed, a cursory glance in the second edition of Kennedy’s A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams (1996), will find the Songs of Travel listed as being completed in the year 1904 (pp. 25-27). Kennedy goes on to explain the various and sundry publications of the songs, and the combinations in which they were published.

\(^{242}\) The publication history of his Four Last Songs is also complicated, but less so than Songs of Travel. See Renée Chérie Clark, “A Critical Appraisal of the Four Last Songs,” 157-173.

\(^{243}\) Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their Songs of Travel,” 130.

\(^{244}\) The most specific information about when “Whither must I wander?” was composed is “1902.” Thus far there is no mention of the composer working on it or even contemplating the text. The earliest discussions of the song mention its publication in The Vocalist and its performance by
What causes the most confusion, however, is the cycle’s publication history. On 2 December 1904 Walter Creighton (baritone) and Hamilton Harty (piano) premiered the first eight of the songs (then thought to be the complete cycle) at Bechstein Hall in London. In 1905 Boosey & Co. published “The Vagabond,” “Bright is the Ring of Words,” and “The Roadside Fire” (numbers 1, 8 and 3 of the cycle) only, as Songs of Travel. It was not until 1907 that these three were reissued these with the words “Part I” added to the title page. That same year (1907), Boosey published Book II, comprised of “Let Beauty Awake,” “Youth and Love,” “In Dreams,” and “The Infinite Shining Heavens” (numbers 2, 4, 5 and 6 of the cycle). This was reissued the same year with “Part 2” added to the title page. (Note that song number 7, “Whither must I wander,” appears in neither Boosey collection.) It was only after the composer’s death that a ninth song, “I have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope,” was discovered among his papers. It is still not known whether Vaughan Williams originally intended this song to be part of the original cycle and then suppressed it, or if it was an afterthought, perhaps even composed after 1904. In any case, it was not until 1960 (after Boosey & Co. had become Boosey and Hawkes) that Songs of Travel

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was finally issued as a complete nine-song cycle (including for the first time “Whither must I Wander” and “I have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope”). Vaughan Williams’s cycle, in its final form, was thus as follows:

1. The Vagabond
2. Let Beauty Awake
3. The Roadside fire (“I will make you brooches”)  
4. Youth and Love
5. In Dreams
6. The Infinite Shining Heavens
7. Whither must I wander (“Home, no more home to me”)  
8. Bright is the Ring of Words
9. I have trod the upward and the downward slope

However, as late as 1950 (while the composer was still alive), this cycle had been the cause of some confusion in Hubert Foss’s discussion of it in his biography of the composer:

Out of Stevenson’s verses he made the two books of Songs of Travel (1905 and 1907 respectively) and one separate song, Whither must I wander?  

Later Foss goes on to say:

Of the two books of Songs of Travel, to Stevenson’s words (taken from the little volume of the same name), the first, containing “The Vagabond,” “Bright is the Ring of Words,” and “The Roadside Fire” (the composer’s not the author’s title), won for itself and still keeps a considerable popularity. The second book attracted far less attention, and is not remembered now.

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248 Aside from Michael Kennedy’s Catalogue, my information for the preceding paragraph comes primarily from Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their Songs of Travel,” 129-136, the most thorough study of the work’s genesis. For a summary of the information contained within both Kennedy and Hallmark, please see Allan Atlas, “Vaughan Williams’s Songs of Travel: A Note on the Structural Role of the Thematic Recollections in Songs 4 and 9,” 105-106.

249 Hubert Foss, Vaughan Williams: A Study, 80.

250 Hubert Foss, Vaughan Williams: A Study, 85.
After its publication, Foss sent his book to the composer to examine. In response, Vaughan Williams sent Foss a letter, dated 7 February 1951, which should have cleared up any issues regarding the *Songs of Travel*:

> I have been through the book carefully, as you asked, and I have found a certain number of misprints and mistakes, which you have doubtless already discovered yourself, but in case not I send them herewith: …

> As regards ‘Songs of Travel’. It was originally written and sung as one cycle. The order was quite different from what it is as now published and included ‘Whither must I wander’, which had already been published, but not by Boosey’s though Boosey’s have it now. Boosey’s originally refused to publish the whole cycle and chose three—they published the others later. I don’t know whether it is worth while doing anything about that.

Furthermore, A. E. F. Dickinson, in 1963, further confused things by erroneously stating that the two volumes of songs were published in 1903 and 1905:

> [The composer] issued seven of these [songs] in two Parts, published separately (1903, 1905): nos, 1, 15, 11, and nos. 9, 3, 4, and 6. Neither of these has much claim to be sung as a suite, or in a continuous series. It may just be said that ‘The Vagabond’ (no. 1) defines the poetic range, and ‘Youth and Love: 2’ (no. 3) returns to the highway.

Vaughan Williams had certainly completed the first eight songs of the cycle by 1904. Based on the selections from the letter quoted above and the program from 251

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252 A. E. F. Dickinson, *Vaughan Williams* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 151. Dickinson’s remaining information about the history of the cycle is inconsistent. For example, the first collection sets poems 1, 14 and 11, not number 15. Also, it is correct that the composer’s second wife, Ursula Vaughan Williams, found the ninth song, “I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope” after the composer died, but Dickinson erroneously claims that the cycle was sung in its entirety (all nine songs), in the order the composer intended on the BBC Home Service on 20 May 1960. (See A. E. F. Dickinson, *Vaughan Williams*, 151.) The first performance of the entire cycle of nine songs was first given a day later, on 21 May 1960 by Hervey Alan, baritone, and Frederick Stone, piano, on the BBC Home Service. (See Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 26.)
the première (which took place on Monday, 2 December 1904 at Bechstein Hall (now Wigmore Hall) in London) which states “The songs of this cycle will be sung in continuity,” we know that the composer had conceived of the cycle as a complete entity at least as early as 1904, despite its convoluted publication history.\textsuperscript{253}

Rufus Hallmark speculates that Vaughan Williams may have first come into contact with Stevenson’s poems when “Whither must I Wander” was printed alongside Stevenson’s obituary in the \textit{Pall Mall Gazette} on 17 December 1894.\textsuperscript{254} At that time these poems had not yet been published; the \textit{Gazette} continued its homage to the poet and author over the next several weeks, publishing poems from what would eventually become \textit{Songs of Travel and Other Verses}, specifically “In the highlands, in the country places” (December 21), “Over the Sea to Skye” (December 31), “I will Make you Brooches” (January 3), and “To the heart of Youth” (January 17).\textsuperscript{255} Stevenson’s \textit{Songs of Travel and Other Verses} (the poems) in its entirety was published posthumously by Chatto & Windus in 1896.

It is not surprising that Vaughan Williams was attracted to these particular poems for their subject matter very closely resembles his favorite novel—George

\textsuperscript{253}Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson, Vaughan Williams and their \textit{Songs of Travel},” 135. Please see Hallmark’s article for an extensive discussion of the history of the publication of these songs.

\textsuperscript{254}Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson, Vaughan Williams and their \textit{Songs of Travel},” 130.

\textsuperscript{255}Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson, Vaughan Williams and their \textit{Songs of Travel},” 130.
Borrow’s *Lavengro: The Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest*. It is not clear when he first read *Lavengro* (initially published in 1851), nor is it clear which version he read (*Lavengro* has an even more convoluted publication history than *Songs of Travel*); but the novel enjoyed immense popularity, and was part of a trend toward treating gypsy themes in the literature of the time. He may also have read the

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256 We know this was his favorite novel and that Borrow was one of his favorite authors because of the following two references: in Ursula Vaughan Williams’s biography of the composer, in Chapter Nine (1927) she describes one of Vaughan Williams’s walking tours and says, “It was still almost the world Borrow had known, certainly not much changed since Hudson had written *A Shepherd’s Life*.” In Chapter Sixteen (1956-1958) Ursula Vaughan Williams and Ralph Vaughan Williams are in Florio on holiday at Villa Cristabella, one of the houses owned by the Waltons. They spend their evenings reading aloud and she says, “….we returned to *Lavengro*, Ralph’s favourite novel, once again…”. (Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 168 and 393 respectively.) James Day, in his biography of the composer, also refers to *Lavengro* as one of the composer’s favorite novel: “Not having had a holiday away from home since 1939, he went with her [Ursula, during the summer after Adeline, his first wife, died] for a few days to Romney Marsh, where he insisted on climbing the church tower at Rye—at the age of seventy-eight—to admire the view. He also took advantage of the holiday to re-read *Lavengro*: Borrow was one of his favourite authors, along with Whitman, Matthew Arnold, and Blake.”. (James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, 89.)

257 *Lavengro: the Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest* was first published in 1851, but it continued to be published during Vaughan Williams’s lifetime. For example, the following are some of the publishing houses in Britain that issued the novel during the composer’s lifetime: Oxford University Press World’s Classics Series in 1904, Everyman’s Library and J. M. Dent in 1906, J. Murray in 1907, J. M. Dent in 1909, J. Murray and T. N. Foulis in 1914, Constable & Company in 1923, and J. Murray again in 1951.

novel’s sequel, *The Romany Rye*. What is clear is that the general theme pervading *Lavengro* is identical to that found in the poems Vaughan Williams chose to set. In some cases, even certain phrases or groups of phrases in Borrow’s novel are reflected in those particular poems of Stevenson’s that Vaughan Williams sets. A few examples from Borrow are as follows:

[Excerpt 1]

“In about two hours I had cleared the Great City, and got beyond the suburban villages, or rather towns, in the direction in which I was travelling; I was in a broad and excellent road, leading I knew not whither. *(Lavengro, 124)*

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258 *Lavengro: the Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest* is the first of two books by George Borrow that together make a complete narrative. The second is *The Romany Rye*. *Lavengro* was first published in 1851, *The Romany Rye* followed in 1857. Despite the fact they were published separately, the two books are meant to be read together. *Lavengro* itself does not really have an ending. It breaks off abruptly after Chapter 100 and continues in *The Romany Rye*. These two books take the form of an autobiography with fictional elements interwoven within the text. Borrow is the scholar of the subtitle, and “lavengro” is Romany for wordsmith. The first section of the book covers the author’s early years in Edinburgh, Ireland and London. The second section (i.e. *The Romany Rye*) covers the author’s departure from London as a result of the decay of his physical and mental health. Throughout the second book he travels the open road as a tinker throughout the English countryside. Throughout both books he frequently meets up with his Gypsy friend, Mr. Jasper Petulengro (“petulengro” means blacksmith), but in the second book he has various adventures throughout the course of his travels. These adventures include fighting a notorious bully, getting poisoned by a gypsy woman for knowing too much about her people, “sharing his campsite” with Isobel Berner (until she leaves him because he did not ask her to marry him), and getting into a tedious argument with a Catholic priest. Through it all he is continually traveling the open road.

In note 15 I discuss the evidence for *Lavengro* being Vaughan Williams’s favorite book. Thus far I have found no mention of *The Romany Rye* in studies of Vaughan Williams, nor is there any mention of *The Romany Rye* in his published correspondence. (He does mention Borrow’s 1941 novel *The Zincali* in reference to *Hugh the Drover* (see, for example, his 15 July 1910 letter to Harold Child and his 13 July 1912 letter to Percy Scholes in Hugh Cobbe, ed., *Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1895-1958*, 72-74 and 135.) However, it seems unlikely that Vaughan Williams would have read *Lavengro* without reading the rest of the story, particularly since *Lavengro* on its own was incomplete and, as will become clear through the rest of this chapter, Vaughan Williams loved a good gypsy tale. Additionally, *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* began to be published together in 1900 by E.M. Hale & Co. Indeed my own copy of the text, a reprint of that edition, includes both *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* and there is no distinction within the body of the work where one ends and the other begins. At this point is it not clear which edition Vaughan Williams read. His copy could well have included both stories.

259 I list only a few here. Since Borrow’s *Lavengro* is about a man who eventually takes to the road and travels around and lives like a gypsy, and Stevenson’s *Songs of Travel* are about a man wandering/travelling, the similarities could be endless.
“It has no roof.”
“Yes, it has.”
“Where?” said the man looking up.
“What do you see above you?”
“The sky.”
“Well?”
“Well!” (Lavengro, 128)

As it was quite a matter of indifference to me in what direction I went, the whole world being before me, … (Lavengro, 162)

I started up and looked around me, the moon was still shining, and the face of the heaven was studded with stars; … (Lavengro, 165)

The reference to the “broad and excellent road” that we read in Excerpt 1 of Lavengro appears in Stevenson’s “The Vagabond.”260 The specific references to the road are “And the road before me,” “And the road below me,” which are then repeated verbatim in the last octet. The last line of Stevenson’s Poem XI (“I will make you brooches”) becomes the first line of Vaughan Williams’s “Roadside Fire” and the song also specifically mentions the broad road: “Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.” Another possible connection appears in the poem Stevenson labels XVI (“To the tune of Wandering Willie”), which Vaughan Williams titles “Whither must I wander?.” In this case, the poetic text does not specify a road being traveled, but rather the idea that one does not know exactly where one is going (i.e., “…leading I knew not whither” in Lavengro). This idea is similarly expressed in Excerpt 3, “…it was quite a matter of indifference to me

in what direction I went…” In both the song cycle and the novel, neither protagonist had a specific destination in mind; both men were simply out of doors travelling the open road.

Excerpt 2, with “the sky” as his roof, might be seen as a link to “The Vagabond,” line 5: “Bed in the bush with stars to see.” Like the main character in Lavengro, the narrator in “The Vagabond” is sleeping rough, out in the open, with the stars as his roof. There are many references to heaven and the stars in Songs of Travel and Other Verses. Of the poems that Vaughan Williams set, “The Infinite Shining Heavens” most closely aligns with the Lavengro Excerpt 4 shown above. Borrow describes a heaven “studded with stars,” while Stevenson writes “in the night/Uncountable angel stars;” in any case, the two share the idea of action.

I am not proposing that Stevenson based any or all of his poems in Songs of Travel on Borrow’s novel Lavengro. In fact, there is no evidence that leads us to believe that Stevenson even read Lavengro. In a discussion of Stevenson’s reading habits and literary influences, Frank McLynn mentions George Borrow, but refers to his The Bible in Spain—not Lavengro. Even here, Borrow’s The Bible in Spain is only discussed among Stevenson’s second tier of literary influences. The specific quote is as follows:

In the main, RLS’s literary tastes remained unchanged. Some ten years later [after his undergraduate days] he wrote an essay showing the mutations that had crept in. In the first league—those all-time favorites to which he returned again and again—he listed Shakespeare, Montaigne and two new entrants: Molière and three Scott novels: Guy Mannering, Rob-Roy, and Redgauntlet; towering above all, though, were the Egoist, which he had read five times, and Bragelonne, which he had read six times. In the
class of second favorites were Pilgrim’s Progress and Borrow’s The Bible in Spain, but this time Hazlitt, together with Wordworth, Burns and Horace, had fallen away into a limbo of the once much-loved but now rarely read; finally there was a fourth category of those to which he thought he would one day return, principally Herrick and Virgil.  

Another reference to George Borrow occurs in a letter Stevenson wrote to his parents on 1 January 1884. In it he gives an account of his finances, acknowledging that, while he should be happy, he is not. Then he begs his parents to send him books, Borrow’s Wild Wales (1862) being the second request.

A Good New Year to you. The year closes, leaving me with 50 pounds in the bank, owing no man nothing. 100 pounds more due to me in a week or so, and 150 pounds more in the course of the month; and I can look back on a total receipt of 465 pounds, 0s. 6d. for the last twelve months! And yet I am not happy! Yet I beg! Here is my beggary:- 1. Sellar’s Trial. 2. George Borrow’s book about Wales. 3. My Grandfather’s Trip to Holland. 4. And (but this is, I fear, impossible) the Bell Rock Book…

Thus, Stevenson certainly knew and read George Borrow, but not necessarily Lavengro. I suggest that certain similarities of text and subject matter attracted Vaughan Williams to Stevenson’s verse, which was itself typical of the wider literary culture that favored gypsy material.

There were other occasions when Vaughan Williams used texts about gypsies or wanderers. In 1904 he drafted 120 bars of “Harnham Down,” the first of what would have been Two Impressions for Orchestra. The unpublished


manuscript is headed by a text from Matthew Arnold’s *The Scholar Gipsy.*\(^{263}\) He returned again to *The Scholar Gipsy* in 1908 in another unpublished (and incomplete) work for solo soprano, chorus and orchestra titled *The Future* (‘A Wanderer is Man from his Birth’).\(^{264}\) Finally, in 1949, he used text from *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis* (also by Matthew Arnold) in *An Oxford Elegy* (Oxford University Press, 1952). According to Ursula Vaughan Williams, there was even a planned opera on Matthew Arnold’s *The Scholar Gipsy.*\(^{265}\)

In 1910 Vaughan Williams started work on what was to become *Hugh the Drover*. This opera tells the story of Mary, the Constable’s daughter, who is soon to marry John the Butcher, a man she hates. Mary longs to leave the town for the wandering life, a longing barely uttered when a new man comes to town, a handsome young rover (Hugh, the drover) whose job is to round up wild ponies for the army. Hugh sings to her of the joys of the open road and Mary falls in love with him. Mary and Hugh eventually take to life together on the open road. A draft of this opera was technically completed by 1914, but it was not fully scored until 1920. Vaughan Williams always intended *Hugh the Drover* to be a traditional English opera, that is, a ballad opera, based on folk-like tunes. His letter to Harold Child, dated about 15 July 1910, at the beginning of their venture specified this (among other things):

\(^{263}\) British Library MS 57258. See also Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 23. According to Kennedy, Vaughan Williams began this piece in 1904 and finished it in 1907, and while it was never published it was performed at the Queen’s Hall in London on 12 November 1907.

\(^{264}\) British Library MS 57283. See also Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 42. There is no date on the manuscript. Kennedy proposes the date of 1908 due to the handwriting and what he refers to as “other factors.”

\(^{265}\) Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 292
…For I have an idea that an opera written to real English words—with a certain amount of real English music and also a real English subject might just hit the right nail on the head. As regards the form—not Wagnerian and not altogether Mozartian—but more the Mozartian with some of his squareness taken away—perhaps a certain amount of the Charpentier-Puccini conversational methods thrown in—but this is all vague and I sh’d like to fit in with your ideas. Only I think the whole thing might be folk-songy in character—with a certain amount of real ballad stuff thrown in.266

However, Vaughan Williams was never entirely satisfied with Child’s libretto, since Child did not seem to completely understand that genre or the dignity that Vaughan Williams wanted to bring to the characters being represented. He continued to revise the opera throughout his life.267

In his article “Vaughan Williams and Literature: An Overview,” Roger Savage includes the opera Riders to the Sea among pieces that involve what he refers to as the “Stevensonian Man” or “Traveling songs,” that is to say, pieces that involve “ridings, rovings, roomings, journeyings, explorings, greetings…”268 However, Savage specifically mentions the widow Maurya’s son as the one of the individuals who is wandering. His list includes figures that represent character traits of the Wayfarer or the “Stevensonian Man.” Maurya’s son has indeed gone on a journey, but unlike the wanderers/gypsies/travelers that will be discussed in


267 For more information, see Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 53 and 98-103. Kennedy also provides a brief yet excellent discussion of the inception of the opera, the working processes between Vaughan Williams and Child, and a synopsis of the plot in his liner notes for the Hyperion Dyad CD recording (1994) with Matthew Best as conductor. See Ralph Vaughan Williams, Hugh the Drover, or Love in the Stocks with Corydon Orchestra, conducted by Matthew Best, recorded 27-30 January 1994, Hyperion CDD 22049 1994, compact disc. See also Roger Savage, “Vaughan Williams, the Romany Ryes, and the Cambridge Ritualists,” 383-418, esp. 390-392.

this chapter, that journey is on the sea, and the people in the village represented in
*Riders to the Sea* earn their living from the sea. Traveling specifically for the
purpose of work is not the intent of the journey in *Songs of Travel*, nor indeed any
of the other pieces with themes of wandering discussed above (with the exception
of *Hugh the Drover*; but for all his pony catching, he still idealizes the
countryside—his work allows him the freedom of the open road); therefore,
*Riders to the Sea* does not contain the trope of wandering or traveling as discussed
here.²⁶⁹

Vaughan Williams’s apparent preoccupation with gypsies, vagabonds, and
other similar wanderers was not singular to the composer or the time period.
People in England became aware of gypsies (Romany) in the Tudor era.²⁷⁰ Angus
Fraser describes the introduction of this new group of people thus:

²⁶⁹ Roger Savage, “Vaughan Williams and Literature: An Overview,” 55. (At this point in his
article, Savage is arguing that not all of Vaughan Williams uses of the “Stevensonian Man” have
happy outcomes. Since Maurya’s son in *Riders to the Sea* dies tragically, it suits the purpose of
his argument.)

²⁷⁰ Archaeologists have discovered the presence of Romany in Britain from as early as the mid-
11th century, but the mention of gypsies or gypsy-like peoples in literature or in the law does not
occur until the Tudor era when they were mentioned by Cromwell in 1537 as being pardoned by
the King for detestable behavior. (See “DNA Surprise: Romani in England 400 Years Too
Early,” *British Archaeology* 89 (July-August 2006):
http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba89/news.shtml#item4 and *OED Online*, “gipsy/gypsy, n,” accessed
March 19 2014, http://0-
www.oed.com.library.hillsdale.edu/view/Entry/78443?redirectedFrom=gypsy.) According to the
*Oxford English Dictionary*, the term ‘gypsy’ (also spelled ‘gipsy’) is the shortened form of
‘Egyptian’ and, in the Tudor era, the term referred to a person who wandered and who was of
Hindu origin and was thought to have come from Egypt. (See *OED Online*, “gipsy/gypsy, n,”
accessed March 19 2014, http://0-
www.oed.com.library.hillsdale.edu/view/Entry/78443?redirectedFrom=gypsy.) The term ‘gypsy’
continued to refer to a dark-skinned person who wandered and still does, in colloquial terms,
continue to refer to a person who wanders or is thought to have a “wandering spirit.” However,
terminology is now more precise and peripatetic cultures worldwide have their own distinct names
depending on the area in which they are found: Cale, Rom, Romanichels, Sinti (Germany and
northern Italy), Ludar (Serbia and/or Romania), Romungre (Hungary), Irish Travelers, Scottish
Travelers, etc. The first three terms tend to be used today as general terms for Romany (‘gypsy’
or wandering people). Because of the stigma placed on wandering cultures, many do not register
their specific race. For more information, please see http://www.gypsyloresociety.org/.
Early in the fifteenth century a strange nomadic people began spreading out over western Europe. They were dark-skinned, and outlandish in dress. They travelled in small bands, headed by leaders with grandiose titles—duke, count or earl—and made their living by horse-trading, tinkering, entertaining, healing, fortune-telling, and begging.271

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gypsy-like characters (that is to say, non-Romany characters but with similar social characteristics) began appearing in literature and poetry in various guises (wayfarers, travelers, journeymen, vagabonds, wanderers, tinkers, beggars, buskers, vagrants) and subsequently on stage. For example, Thomas Harmon’s collection of stories, Caveat for Common Curistors, Vulgarly called Vagabonds, appeared in 1566, and Ben Johnson’s masque, Masque of the Gypsies, first appeared on stage in 1621. Table 1, which appears below, is a chronological list of English-language novels, essays, plays, poems, and the like, which include gypsies or gypsy-like characters.272

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre (if known)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1566</td>
<td>Thomas Harmon</td>
<td>Caveat for Common Cursitors</td>
<td>Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1578</td>
<td>George Whetstone</td>
<td>Promos and Cassandra</td>
<td>Rhyming play</td>
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</table>

271 Angus Fraser, “Authors’ Gypsies,” Antiquarian Book Monthly Review 20 (1993), 10. Sir Angus Fraser (1928-2001) was, in his professional life, the Chairman of the Board of Customs and Excise from 1983-1987 and Efficiency Advisor to Prime Minister Thatcher from 1988 to 1992. He held both posts after a long and distinguished career in the Civil Service and after receiving the CBE in 1981 and being knighted in 1985. While he was not an academic, he was and still is the recognized authority on George Borrow and the Gypsies, through his many well-regarded publications on those subjects. In 1993 Glasgow University recognized his literary efforts with a D Litt. See his obituary in The Daily Telegraph on 8 June 2001 for further discussion of his work on Borrow and the Gypsies.

272 This list is continually growing as I continue to encounter more and more works that include gypsies or gypsy-like characters. In addition to my own reading, several works have been helpful, specifically, Angus Fraser, “Author’s Gypsies,” Antiquarian Book Monthly Review 20(1993), 10-17; Roger Savage, “Vaughan Williams, The Romany Ryes, and the Cambridge Ritualists,” 383-418; Abigail Rothblatt Bardi, “The Gypsy as Trope in Victorian and Modern British Literature” (PhD diss., University of Maryland College Park, 2007): 1-314
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>1608</td>
<td>Thomas Dekker</td>
<td><em>Lantern and Candlelight</em></td>
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<td>1610</td>
<td>Samuel Rid</td>
<td><em>Martin Marckall</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1612</td>
<td>Samuel Rid</td>
<td><em>The Art of Juggling</em></td>
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<td>1615</td>
<td>Middleton and Rowley</td>
<td><em>More Dissemblers besides Women</em></td>
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<td>1621</td>
<td>Ben Jonson</td>
<td><em>Masque of the Gypsies</em></td>
<td>Masque</td>
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<td>1623</td>
<td>Middleton and Rowley</td>
<td><em>Spanish Gypsy</em></td>
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<td>1641</td>
<td>Richard Brome</td>
<td><em>A Jovial Crew: or, The Merry Beggars</em></td>
<td>Play/opera (1731)</td>
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<td>1665</td>
<td>Richard Head</td>
<td><em>The English Rogue</em></td>
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<td>1711</td>
<td>Sir Roger de Coverley?</td>
<td><em>Spectator, no. 130</em> (meets with a band of ‘lawless vagrants’, has his fortune told, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1722</td>
<td>Daniel Defoe</td>
<td><em>Moll Flanders</em></td>
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<td>1726</td>
<td>Mrs. Jane Barker</td>
<td><em>The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen</em> (“The History of the Lady Gypsy” and “The Story of Tangerine, the Gentleman-Gypsy”)</td>
<td>Stories</td>
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<td>1749</td>
<td>Henry Fielding</td>
<td><em>Tom Jones</em></td>
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<td>1755</td>
<td>Bampfylde-Moore Carew</td>
<td><em>The Life and adventures of Bampfylde-Moore Carew</em></td>
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<td>1766</td>
<td>Oliver Goldsmith</td>
<td><em>The Vicar of Wakefield</em></td>
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<td>1773</td>
<td>Charles Dibdin</td>
<td><em>La Zingara</em></td>
<td>Play</td>
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<td>1775</td>
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<td><em>May-Day, or the Little Gipsy</em></td>
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<td>1777</td>
<td>David Garrick</td>
<td><em>The Norwood Gypsies</em></td>
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<td>1785</td>
<td>William Cowper</td>
<td><em>The Task</em> (Book 1)</td>
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<td>1792</td>
<td>Samuel Rogers</td>
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<td>George Crabbe</td>
<td><em>Tales</em> (“The Lover’s Journey”)</td>
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<td>James Hogg</td>
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<td>1815</td>
<td>William Hazlitt</td>
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<td>Walter Scott</td>
<td><em>Guy Mannering</em></td>
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<td>Jane Austen</td>
<td><em>Emma</em></td>
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<td>John Leyden</td>
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<td>1820</td>
<td>William Barnes</td>
<td>“Destiny”</td>
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<td>1821</td>
<td>Douglas Jerrold</td>
<td><em>The Gipsy of Durncleuch</em> (version of Guy Mannering)</td>
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<td>John Gault</td>
<td><em>Sir Andrew Wylie</em></td>
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<td>Washington Irving (US)</td>
<td><em>Bracebridge Hall</em></td>
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<td>Mary Russell Mitford</td>
<td><em>Our Village</em> (includes two essays about gypsies)</td>
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<td>Bulwer-Lytton</td>
<td><em>The Disowned</em> (*first novel to introduce the gypsy living wagon?)</td>
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<td>H. J. Copson</td>
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<td>G. P. R. James</td>
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<td>Captain Frederick Marryat</td>
<td><em>Japhet in Search of a Father</em></td>
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<td>1837</td>
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<td><em>Gideon giles</em></td>
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<td>Browning</td>
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<td>Ralph Waldo Emerson (US)</td>
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<td>George Eliot</td>
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<td>Wilkie Collins</td>
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<td>“The Red-Headed League”</td>
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<td>Alan Patrick Herbert</td>
<td>“The Bomber Gipsy”</td>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>Virginia Woolf</td>
<td><em>Orlando</em></td>
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<td>D. H. Lawrence</td>
<td>“The Virgin and the Gypsy”</td>
<td>Short Story</td>
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<td>1930</td>
<td>Alan Patrick Herbert</td>
<td><em>The Water Gipsies!</em></td>
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<td>R. D. Blackmore</td>
<td><em>Cripps the Carrier</em></td>
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The works listed are either devoted to the portrayal of a gypsy, gypsies, and gypsy life, or simply have a prominent scene involving a gypsy or gypsies or the idea of them. The portrayal of gypsies in literature continued up through the twentieth century, although their characterization was not always the same. In his seminal article on the subject, Angus Fraser explains that each century has had its own literary perception of gypsies. For example, he explains that in Elizabethan and Jacobean times, gypsies were almost always portrayed as “rogues, along with the motley crew of beggars, thieves and cut-purses haunting the roads of England and
the alleys of London.” In eighteenth century English literature, Fraser claims that they are most often “in the character of light-fingered, fortune-telling rascals.” However, in the nineteenth century, he argues that “Gypsies were wild outcasts who hinted at the supernatural, the mysterious and the criminal: they could be used, in books for children as well as adults, as a device to help in carrying the plot and explaining away robberies, occult happenings or other strange events, or in accounting for lost children, stolen from their parents.” In these instances Fraser is talking specifically about gypsies and not about the other possible varieties of gypsy-inspired characters (such as wanderers).

What started out in Britain as an interest in gypsies morphed over the years into a fascination with any group that represented the wandering life in any way, that is to say, any person or persons that came under the guise of gypsies, wayfarers, wanderers, travelers, tinkers, journeymen, vagabonds, rogues, tramps and the like. All of these “types” began appearing in literature as well as music in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What is perhaps most interesting is the variety of forms that these representations take. What follows are just a few examples from major authors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The first is from Jane Austen’s *Emma* (1816):

Miss Smith, and Miss Bickerton, another parlour boarder at Mrs. Goddard’s, who had been also at the ball, had walked out together, and taken a road, the Richmond road, which, though apparently public enough for safety, had led them into alarm.—About half a mile beyond Highbury, making a sudden turn, and deeply shaded

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by elms on each side, it became for a considerable stretch very
retired; and when the young ladies had advanced some way into it,
they had suddenly perceived at a small distance before them, on a
broader patch of greensward by the side, a party of gipsies. A
child on the watch, came towards them to beg; and Miss Bickerton,
excessively frightened, gave a great scream, and calling on Harriet
to follow her, ran up a steep bank, cleared a slight hedge at the top,
and made the best of her way by a short cut back to Highbury. But
poor Harriet could not follow. She had suffered very much from
cramp after dancing, and her first attempt to mount the bank
brought on such a return of it as made her absolutely powerless—
and in this state, and exceedingly terrified, she had been obliged to
remain.

How the trampers might have behaved, had the young
ladies been more courageous, must be doubtful; but such an
invitation for attack could not be resisted; and Harriet was soon
assailed by half a dozen children, headed by a stout woman and a
great boy, all clamorous, and impertinent in look, though not
absolutely in word.—More and more frightened, she immediately
promised them money, and taking out her purse, gave them a
shilling, and begged them not to want more, or to use her ill.—She
was then able to walk, though but slowly, and was moving away—
but her terror and her purse were too tempting, and she was
followed, or rather surrounded, by the whole gang, demanding
more.276

There are a few things to note about this passage. It represents what was, at the
time, the more established view of the gypsies, or any kind of traveling folk.

These people were residing on commons, and, seeing what appeared to be easy
targets, used children in order to beg (or even steal) money from the respectable
women in the story. Also, Austen refers to the same group of people as both
gypsies and trampers, thereby providing an example of the interchangeability of
these terms, at least in literature.

In Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre, no actual gypsy appears, but Mr.
Rochester dresses up as one to play the part of a gypsy, and Brontë, like Austen,

276 Jane Austen, Emma, annotated and ed. by David M. Shapard (New York: Anchor Books,
2012), 588.
presents the more expected picture of a gypsy. Rochester has returned home in this disguise in order both to tell the fortunes of the unmarried ladies in the house and to discover and reveal the true feelings of Jane and Miss Ingram. However, when this “old lady” first appears, she is described as “quite troublesome,” “black as a crock,” and a “tinkler.” The magistrate who happens to be among the house party says to tell her that she will be put in the stocks, but since the members of the house party had been talking of visiting a gypsy camp, they decide to let her/him remain to tell the fortunes of the unmarried ladies of quality.277

Charles Dickens, like Jane Austen, did not romanticize the gypsies. In chapter thirteen of David Copperfield (1850), the “trampers” are presented as nasty and unlikeable characters when the young David comes across them on the road:

The trampers were worse than ever that day, and inspired me with a dread that is yet quite fresh in my mind. Some of them were most ferocious-looking ruffians, who stared at me as I went by; and stopped, perhaps, and called after me to come back and speak to them, and when I took to my heels, stoned me. I recollect one young fellow—a tinker, I supposed, from his wallet and brazier—who had a woman with him, and who faced about and stared at me thus; and then roared at me in such a tremendous voice to come back, that I halted and looked round.

‘Come here, when you’re called,’ said the tinker, ‘or I’ll rip your young body open.’

‘What do you mean,’ said the tinker, ‘by wearing my brother’s silk handkerchief! Give it over here!’ And he had mine off my neck in a moment, and tossed it to the woman.

The woman burst into a fit of laughter, as if she thought this a joke, and tossed it back to me, nodded once, as slightly as before, and made the word ‘Go!’ with her lips. Before I could obey, however, the tinker seized the handkerchief out of my hand.

with a roughness that threw me away like a feather, and putting it
loosely round his own neck, turned upon the woman with an oath,
and knocked her down. I never shall forget seeing her fall
backward on the hard road, and lie there with her bonnet tumbled
off and her hair all whitened in the dust; nor, when I looked back
from a distance, seeing her sitting on the pathway, which was a
blank by the roadside, wiping the blood from her face with a
corner of her shawl, while he went on ahead.\footnote{278}

Once again, ‘tramp’ and ‘tinker’ are used interchangeably, although the young
David identifies the tramp as a tinker by the latter’s tools. Here Dickens presents
the trampers as frightening, violent creatures, willing to lie to get what they want.
When the poor woman within the gypsy group intervenes, she gets punched in the
face and left bloodied in the road.

All three of these Romantic-era fictional examples presented thus far, that
is, the Austen, Brontë, and Dickens, use certain identifying words
interchangeably: tramp, trampers, tinker, gypsy. While this interchangeability of
terms may have happened frequently in fiction, their usage, according to the law,
was somewhat different, and more specific. M. A[nn] Crowther, in the article
“The Tramp” explains:

The old words ‘vagrant’ or ‘vagabond’ with their Latin roots,
signify the aimless wandering of the dispossessed: ‘tramp’ did not
enter the language until the later seventeenth century, when it was
applied to men moving purposefully in search of work; the artisan
went ‘on the tramp’ between jobs. The two terms were
synonymous by the nineteenth century, but policy makers believed
that it was possible, and necessary, to distinguish between the two
types of wanderer.\footnote{279}


\footnote{279} M. A. Crowther, “The Tramp,” 97.
What she means is that when it came to the law (and when it came to fiction), the terms used to define or describe wanderers were very nuanced. In 1824 Parliament passed The Vagrancy Act, which was meant to make a clean sweep of what were no less than 27 pre-existing Vagrancy Acts. Prior to 1824, the existing law had identified three levels of homeless wanderer: the “Idle and Disorderly,” “Rogues and Vagabonds” and “Incorrigible Rogues,” in ascending order of seriousness and villainy. The first of the three levels refers to those who have neglected their families, are willfully idle, or those who beg within their parish. The second group refers to those who have become professional itinerant beggars outside their parish, leaving their families to the mercy of the parish poor relief, fortune tellers, traveling entertainers, reputed thieves or suspect persons. The third group includes anyone who loitered about and was deemed up to no good (although nothing specific could be proved against them), or anyone previously convicted in the ‘rogues and vagabonds’ group. The “Idle and Disorderly” could be jailed for up to a month; Rogues and Vagabonds were most likely whipped, then jailed for up to six months; Incorrigible Rogues were typically flogged, then put in jail for up to two years, forced into the armed forces, or even transported.\textsuperscript{280}

The 1824 Vagrancy Act eased these punishments somewhat (one month jail sentence for the Idle and Disorderly, three for Rogues and Vagabonds, and a year for Incorrigible Rogues, and only the last group could be flogged, although the

\textsuperscript{280} Lionel Rose, ‘Rogues and Vagabonds’: Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815-1985, 4. See also http://www.lawreform.ie/_fileupload/Reports/rVagrancy.htm for general information about the Vagrancy Law in Britain and Ireland, its history, and the changes that have been made to the law throughout the years since 1824.
Act did not specify the number of strokes nor the instrument of chastisement), mostly to relieve what had been an incredible financial burden on local parishes.

The 1824 Vagrancy Act originally applied only to England and Wales. However, the Vagrancy Act of 1898 and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1912 extended the provisions of the 1824 Act to Scotland and Ireland.²⁸¹ While the Vagrancy Act has remained in place, how it has been interpreted over the years has changed and eased somewhat. In 1904, for example 5198 people were incarcerated in England and Wales for sleeping out. In 1906, the Vagrancy Committee recommended that merely sleeping out should not be an offence warranting jail time unless some other public nuisance was involved. By 1910 a relative of Vaughan Williams (they were both great-great-grandsons of the famous potter, Josiah Wedgwood), the Liberal MP Josiah Clement Wedgewood spoke up for the rights of “harmless sleepers-out,” and that same year another Liberal MP asked the Home Secretary, “does he think there would be any more harm in the poor wretches sleeping on the Embankment than what one frequently sees in this House, that is, Ministers sleeping on the benches?”²⁸²

The Poor Law also has its own set of specific definitions of the terms, which were rather different than those of the Vagrancy Act, and which also affected wanderers. Rachel Vorspan’s article “Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England” identifies three categories of

²⁸¹ Please see http://www.lawreform.ie/_fileupload/Reports/rVagrancy.htm. In particular, page 6 of this document outlines the changes that added both Scotland and Ireland and the subsequent attempts at repeals.

²⁸² Lionel Rose, ‘Rogues and Vagabonds’: Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815-1985, 142.
individuals. The vagrant or ‘casual’ is someone who is destitute with no permanent address who sought relief in a workhouse. A pauper vagrant includes two sub-categories: the unskilled laborers (navies, sailors, agricultural works, etc.) and the professional tramps and beggars. The group that Vorspan says threw things off were what were called the “wayfarers of undetermined status”—that is to say, demobilized soldiers who did not have a peace-time profession and casual laborers who would wander from job to job. This particular group blurred the lines between classes283 because they were able to work and did work, but seemed unable to keep a job for more than a few days or weeks. They would then wander off to their next job. 284 The demobilized soldiers and casual laborers did not fit into the “unskilled laborers” or “professional tramps and beggars” categories.

The kind of behavior that was described in the fictional accounts discussed above must have in some way depicted the reality. That is to say, the depictions and descriptions that Austen, Brönte, and Dickens presented must have in some way represented what they saw or what was the general perception of the time. 

*Emma*, although fiction, was very much a piece of social commentary. It describes the behavior of women in the early nineteenth century, and in our specific example, women’s reactions to gypsies. *Jane Eyre* was also fiction, but was a piece of social criticism. Throughout the novel there is a thread of morality, of showing what is and what should be. *David Copperfield* is the most

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283 Vorspan talks about different “classes” of paupers and vagrants. This is the type of “class” I mean here. See Rachel Vorspan, “Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England,” *The English Historical Review* 92, no. 362 (January 1977): 59-60.

autobiographical novel of Charles Dickens, so we have to wonder if the scene with the tinker (or one like it) really happened. However, later in the nineteenth century things began to change. Or, perhaps it is fairer to say that the public perception of the gypsy, or anyone engaging in a wandering life, was changing. (Also, as you can see from the definitions of terms presented by the laws above and by the many terms used for wandering individuals, gypsies, tramps and vagabonds were not a homogeneous group.) This change was so profound that in 1888 the Gypsy Lore Society was formed (and is still functioning today). The idea for the Gypsy Lore Society had come about in 1874 when Charles Godfrew Leland and Edward Palmer, a Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University talked about starting a journal devoted to the study of Gypsies and invited George Borrow and Dr. Bath Smart to join with them. Unfortunately, George Borrow died in 1881 and there is no record of his being involved in the Society. The change in the perception of the gypsy continued in literature through the early twentieth century. By the time D. H. Lawrence wrote his short story “The Virgin and the Gypsy” in 1926 (published posthumously in 1930), the gypsy, while still a tinker, and still telling fortunes, was the hero. He saved the girl in the end.

In poetry of the nineteenth century we also see the perception of the gypsy changing from that of the rogue to a representation of freedom. In Robert Browning’s “Flight of the Duchess” (1845) and “Fifine at the Fair” (1872) the


286 Likewise, Vaughan Williams was not involved with the Gypsy Lore Society. There is no mention of it in any of his letters, and none of his biographers include any mention of it.
gypsies become emblems of escape from the confines of ordinary life. In Matthew Arnold’s *The Scholar Gypsy* (1853), the gypsies represented figures of escape, mystery, and freedom. Robert Louis Stevenson’s verse that Vaughan Williams sets in his 1904 cycle presents quite a different picture from the earlier accounts presented by Austen, Brontë and Dickens. In *Songs of Travel* Stevenson presents what is often viewed as the romanticized and sentimental tramp of the Edwardians, not the frighteningly violent thief nor the fortune teller. With Stevenson we get the longing for, and the glories of, the open road, as well as the loveliness of nature in its idealized form, but almost none of the nastiness. For all of the people who had fled the country in search of jobs, thanks to encroaching industrialization, the gypsy life, or the wandering life, or the tramps (or whatever they chose to call the phenomenon) represented a freedom that people no longer thought they had. Living and working in an urban environment meant constantly being surrounded by people, being under consistent surveillance (even if people were not necessarily conscious of it), being tied to the clock, and being held to certain modes of behavior. Crowther explains:

> By the Edwardian period, the tramp was not only his traditional self, but had taken on a new form as the guardian of primeval instincts against the encroachments of business and city life. Being close to nature, he understood elemental values. The practical corollary of this, for the newly leisured classes, was Mr. Toad’s comfortable gypsy cart, or the new craze for camping, hiking, and sleeping out—even though the latter contravened the Vagrancy Act and caused problems with the rural police.\(^{287}\)

\(^{287}\) M. A. Crowther, “The Tramp,” 105. Mr. Toad is one of the main characters in Kenneth Graham’s novel *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). In *The Wind in the Willows*, Mr. Toad, Mole, Ratty, and other anthropomorphized animals explore nature and the countryside in rural England. In the novel, Mr. Toad famously follows the fads of the time, one of which is to travel around in a horse-drawn caravan. Graham’s novel contains a fictional depiction of ‘gypsophilia’.
In *Back to the Land*, Jan Marsh, while not discussing this subject specifically, does explain that it was in the Victorian era that “cycling, walking and camping first became popular—taking to the open road and sleeping under the stars.” Later on she explains that in the Victorian Era for those that were more financially better off, “caravanning with a gypsy-style horse and van was a popular holiday and fully-equipped vans could be hired by the week for a slow perambulation around the New Forest, for example.” (Savage also links this attitude to the Victorian era.)

Again, Marsh does not necessarily connect the popularity of “taking to the open road” with the public’s acceptance and even admiration of the gypsy way of life. In fact, at one point she even states, “Exactly how this cluster of notions came together is not clear, but a large part of the appeal of this ‘alternative’ movement was its openness and flexibility.” However, these concepts are related. Marsh does recognize that Britain’s debt to the Industrial Revolution, and the subsequent removal of much of the populace from the rural areas to the

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288 Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880-1914*, 7. The popularity of these activities (i.e., cycling, walking, camping, caravanning—in short, taking to the open road), helped to alter the previous negative perception of gypsy or gypsy-like characters to more positive ones by the Edwardian Era.


cities,\textsuperscript{292} had something to do with people’s fascination with the gypsy lifestyle.

In the first chapter of her book she writes:

\ldots the visible decline of the countryside prompted a sudden rush of nostalgia for rural life. Traditionally, the country held an ambivalent position in English cultural attitudes, sometimes seen as the abode of joy and tranquility, more often regarded as dull. Now, with the traditional countryside of England apparently disappearing for ever, pastoral attitudes were reasserted with intensity. The city was seen as physically and morally corrupting, damaged by ‘the inner darkness in high places which comes with a commercial age’, in Forster’s words. Health and happiness were only to be found in the country, in rural life and agricultural occupations.\textsuperscript{293}

Literature and poetry that represented gypsies, tramps or the like in a positive light, or in some way promoted the wandering life, provided the wandering was through a rural area, was all part of the nostalgia and the reassertion of pastoral attitudes that Marsh mentions. In a more recent article, Savage agrees with Marsh and says:

\ldots the new gypsophilia offered an escape from the prison houses of Victorian respectability, material acquisitiveness, wage labour, creeping industrialism, tired religious orthodoxy, and sterile rationalism. In their place it offered the open road and sky, freedom of body and mind, an enviably unanxious simplicity of life, a grittily cheerful paganism, an intriguing language to learn in Romany, and (for the truly adventurous) the possibility of discovering a secret wisdom: the lore of mind manipulation and control of the Gorgio imagination which lay—perhaps, who knew?—behind Gypsy fortune-telling.\textsuperscript{294}

\textsuperscript{292} I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{293} Jan Marsh, \textit{Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914}, 4. The E. M. Forster reference is \textit{Howard’s End}, 1912, Ch. XLI.

Robert Louis Stevenson’s and Vaughan Williams’s *Songs of Travel* fit with this
new attitude, this idea of prettifying what had previously been thought of as a
“pestiferous breed.”

**The Songs**

The pairing of Robert Louis Stevenson and Ralph Vaughan Williams is
not quite as disparate as that of Eduard Mörike and Hugo Wolf, but the picture
presented by Stevenson and Vaughan Williams as collaborators is still somewhat
unusual. Stevenson, a Scotsman, had left Britain for various reasons, his health
foremost among them; he was chronically ill with upper respiratory problems, and
frequently subject to hemorrhages that left him bedridden and unable to move.
His ailments were such that he was described as “bone thin and slightly bug-eyed,

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295 The term “pestiferous breed” is first used by Lionel Rose in *Rogues and Vagabonds*: *Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815-1985*, 3.

296 Susan Youens has described the pairing of Eduard Mörike and Hugo Wolf as “one of the
oddest of odd couples” despite their marriage of music and poetry (ix). Briefly, Mörike was born
to a lower-middle-class family in the small town of Ludwigsburg in the kingdom of Württemberg.
He saw a series of tragedies in his youth: his father’s death and his brother’s suicide. He was
educated for the Lutheran ministry, but turned out to be particularly unsuited for that vocation,
moving from vicarage to vicarage in various villages before finally settling in Cleversulzbach, but
not in time to save his engagement to Luise Rau. He was a hypochondriac whose various
illnesses, brought on presumably by his hatred for his occupation, finally forced him to retire from
the church at the age of thirty-nine and become a teacher at a girl’s school. While Mörike did
finally marry, the marriage did not last due to jealousy between his sister, who lived with him, and
his wife. Mörike’s literary output is slim. Hugo Wolf was a child prodigy, studying violin, piano
and theory early on and later attended the Vienna Conservatory. Unlike Mörike, Wolf was always
certain of his vocation (even if his father was unhappy about his chosen profession). Musically
speaking, Mörike and Wolf were at odds as well. Mörike preferred Mozart, while Wolf had found
his heroes early on: Wagner and Liszt. For more on the pairing of Mörike and Wolf see Susan
Youens, *Hugo Wolf and his Mörike Lieder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000),
especially the preface and Chapter 1. Her description summarized above appears on page ix.
perpetually susceptible to illness, disease, and every physical disaster.”

Between 1873 and 1887 he travelled to New York, California, back to Scotland, then to Switzerland, France, England, and upstate New York. In 1888 he sailed the South Seas in order to write a series of travel sketches. Stevenson visited Marquesas, Paumotus, Tahiti, Hawaii, and finally Samoa in 1890, where he remained for the rest of his life. Additionally, Stevenson remained politically a staunch conservative throughout his life. Vaughan Williams presents quite a different picture. In paintings and photographs of him, he is tall and hearty, with a stomach that bespeaks a man that enjoyed his food and drink. We also know from Ursula’s biography that he enjoyed good health until late in his life.

Politically, he was a liberal. Vaughan Williams did travel, but unlike Stevenson, who tended to travel for journalistic or health reasons, the composer travelled for compositional purposes, or for holidays. Despite these differences between the poet and composer, both men had an appreciation of travel. Moreover, Vaughan Williams’s setting of these particular Stevenson poems are significant to his career. Roger Savage refers to this cycle as the “breakthrough into a first phase of real maturity,” and Stephen Banfield sees it as Vaughan Williams’s link to the

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past, contact with the contemporary world, and demonstrating his complete and utter understanding of the poet and his poetry:

The dominant impression is one of absolute integrity to the spirit of Stevenson. Vaughan Williams’s capacity for empathy, which we have already observed in relation to Rossetti, blots out the obvious dissimilarity between the frail, tubercular, restlesslly wandering and sensitively observing poet and the stolid, slowly achieving, upper-middle-class composer, and produces a work as fertile in its Romantic wayfaring images for early-20th-century England as was *Die Winterreise* for early-19th-century Vienna. The images themselves are different—Edwardian and inter-war England dreamt of open roads, gently flowing rivers, thatched cottages, Irish country lasses an gipsy caravans with canaries…rather than frozen streams, linden trees and hurdy-gurdies—but the wanderer impulse, associated with both joy and sorrow, pervades…Vaughan Williams, Schubert and Schumann alike. Perhaps it is part of an escapist dream; perhaps it stems from a desire to experience all things, to observe rather than judge.300

The poet and composer did have some things in common, though. Both went into professions that their families regarded as less than ideal, and both achieved their first professional breakthroughs in their thirties. Stevenson did not publish his first novel, *Treasure Island*, until he was 33 (in 1883). Vaughan Williams did not publish his first symphony, *A Sea Symphony*, until he was 37 (in 1909). By the time *Treasure Island* was issued Stevenson had published a short story collection (*New Arabian Nights*) and several pieces of travel writing. By 1904, the year *Songs of Travel* was published, Vaughan Williams was not quite as well known, but as we saw in the last chapter, he had published the one song that would assure him fame (and prosperity), “Linden Lea,” in 1902.301 However,

300 Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 83.

301 In a letter to Robert F. McEwen postmarked 29 March 1925, Vaughan Williams refers to the money he has made from “Linden Lea” as follows: “Also, I feel that I ought to be able (if necessary) to do this myself out of the ill-gotten gains of such sins of my youth as ‘Linden Lea’
since it was “just a song” and not a symphony (see my opening chapter), scholars
tend not to count it as a piece worthy of notice. (As a side note, by the time
Vaughan Williams published *A Sea Symphony* in 1909, he had also published two
song cycles in 1904 (*House of Life* and *Songs of Travel*), the cantata *Willow-Wood*
in 1903, *In the Fen Country* in 1904, the *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1 in E minor* in
1906, *Toward the Unknown Region* in 1907, and had edited the English Hymnal
(1907) and had written and seen performed *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1906); but
what made him a grown-up composer in most critics’ eyes was the symphony.)

Of the forty-four poems that comprise Stevenson’s *Songs of Travel and
Other Verses*, Vaughan Williams chose poems contained within the first half of
the collection. This makes sense because many of the poems in the second half of
the collection are dedicated to family or friends (XXVI “My Wife,” XXVIII “To an Island Princess,” XXIX “To Kalakaua,” XXX “To Princess Kaiulani,” XXXI
Crockett”). Also, many of the poems in the second half are geographically
specific to the South Pacific, and some are narrative poems (e.g. XXXVII “The
House of Tembinoka”), which would have hardly fitted the bill. Vaughan

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which becomes every year more horribly popular.” Hugh Cobbe, ed., *Letters of Ralph Vaughan
Williams*, 158.

302 The poems in Stevenson’s collection that are dedicated to a particular person tend to be about
or inspired by that person (e.g., “My Wife” or “To Princess Kaiulani” or any of the other listed
above). Hence, they would not easily have fit within the cycle’s narrative framework.

303 Rufus Hallmark also discusses this in his article. See Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis
Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their *Songs of Travel,*” 131-132.
Williams chose texts that ultimately fulfilled a very specific narrative. The poems Vaughan Williams chose are displayed in the table below. (The left-hand column shows the order of the poems as they appear in Stevenson’s book. The right-hand column displays the order as they appear in Vaughan Williams’s cycle.)

Table 3.2: RLS and RVW orderings for *Songs of Travel*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poems (RLS)</th>
<th>Songs (RVW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of poem or first line</td>
<td>Title of song, with poem number in parenthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. The Vagabond (To an air of Schubert)</td>
<td>1. The Vagabond (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Youth and Love—II</td>
<td>2. Let Beauty Awake (IX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. In Dreams, Unhappy</td>
<td>3. The Roadside Fire (XI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. The Infinite Shining Heavens</td>
<td>4. Youth and Love (III)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Let Beauty Awake</td>
<td>5. In Dreams (IV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. I will make you brooches</td>
<td>6. The Infinite Shining Heavens (VI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. Bright is the Ring of Words</td>
<td>7. Whither must I wander (XVI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI. Home, no more home to me</td>
<td>8. Bright is the Ring of Words (XIV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXII. I have trod the upward and the downward slope</td>
<td>9. I have trod the upward and the downward slope. (XXII)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In re-ordering the poems, Vaughan Williams created a specific narrative not readily apparent in the poems as ordered in Stevenson’s collection. Vaughan Williams’s constructed narrative corresponds very neatly with nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain’s gypsophilia and with certain aspects of *Lavengro*, in which a man decides to take to the open road, traveling and sleeping under the stars. On his travels he meets and falls in love with a woman, but he leaves her and continues on his journey alone. Matthew Larson and Rufus Hallmark have dealt specifically with the narrative structure of Vaughan

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304 Michael Kennedy has this listed as Stevenson poem no. II, which is incorrect. It is poem III, but it is an easy mistake to make, since there are two poems titled “Youth and Love” : poem no. II is “Youth and Love—I” and poem no. III is “Youth and Love – II”. Please see Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 25.
Williams’s cycle. While both authors read the overall narrative structure of the cycle similarly, i.e., that each song represents another stage in the vagabond’s (or artist’s, or narrator’s) life, each has a slightly different reading of the individual songs. Additionally, they interpret the main character differently. Larson refers to the protagonist simply as the narrator, while Hallmark refers to him as the vagabond or artist. Hallmark goes even further and argues that the narrative structure of the entire cycle exhibits the stages of the vagabond-artist’s life and career. Like Hallmark, I do not see the protagonist simply as a narrator. I see the protagonist as the vagabond himself.

I - The Vagabond (poem I)

Give to me the life I love,
Let the lave go by me,
Give the jolly heaven above
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river –
There’s the life for a man like me,
There’s the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o’er me;
Give the face of earth around
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above
And the road below me.


Or let autumn fall on me
Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree,
Biting the blue finger.
White as meal the frosty field –
Warm the fireside haven –
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even!

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o’er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I ask not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I ask, the heaven above
And the road below me.

“The Vagabond” is the first poem of Stevenson’s collection and the first song of Vaughan Williams’s cycle. The term chosen for the traveler is quite specific (“Vagabond”). A definition from 1901 explains that a vagabond was considered:

One who has no fixed abode or home, and one who wanders about from place to place; spec. one who does this without regular occupation or obvious means of support; an itinerant beggar; idle loafer, or tramp; a vagrant.307

While it is not specified in “The Vagabond,” “Whither must I wander,” the seventh song of the cycle, indicates that the “Vagabond” used to live in a physical dwelling. Lines 6, 14, 22 and 23 of the seventh song all refer to a physical building: “The true word of welcome was spoken in the door,” “Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold,” “Fair shine the day on the house with the open door,” and “Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney” (emphasis

mine). Since “Whither must I wander” was the first poem in the cycle Vaughan Williams set, it would seem likely that he had these references in mind when he composed “The Vagabond.” He also would have been aware of the nuanced meanings of vagabond, including its slightly disreputable connotation. Nevertheless, “The Vagabond” is the title of Stevenson’s poem and Vaughan Williams’s song; since he is the protagonist of the cycle, this song must open the cycle. Hallmark speculates that Vaughan Williams maintained the original title of the poem, and indeed retained the title of the poet’s collection, either out of respect for the poet, or to capitalize on Stevenson’s popularity.  

Larson and Hallmark both read this initial poem similarly. Larson sees the narrator asserting his life’s philosophy, saying, “I will live a life of solitary wandering or I will not live at all; nothing will alter my course.” Hallmark also reads it as establishing the protagonist’s character. Indeed, we are told exactly what he wants: only the life he loves, and the rest should be left (“lave” is Scots for left over, remains, or the rest) by the wayside. He then proceeds to list the things he does want: the heavens above, the nearest side road (i.e. “the byway”), to bed down where he can see stars, and to dip his bread in the river. This is not the wanderer of the early nineteenth-century Germany, nor the wanderer of Müller’s and Schubert’s Winterreise; his is not a Wanderlust (a journey taken for  

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310 Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their Songs of Travel,” 133.
the sheer pleasure or compulsion of it), nor is he engaged in a particularly Müllerian event, a journey undertaken in sorrow. He is full of confidence, our Vagabond. He knows that the colder weather of autumn and winter months will produce dire effects (“Silencing the bird on tree/Biting the blue finger./White as meal the frosty field”), yet he remains undeterred and resolute. Knowing all of this, he seeks neither friend, hope, nor lover—he wants only the open road.

Stevenson emphasizes this confidence (bordering on brazenness) of the protagonist. In the second octet, the Vagabond challenges nature: “Let the blow fall soon or late, / Let what will be o’er me.” In the octet that follows he acknowledges the realities of autumn and winter. But after this acknowledgement Stevenson repeats the second octet at the end of the poem (with one slight change). Line 15 of the second octet reads “All I seek, the heaven above” (followed in the next line by “And the road below me.”). In the fourth octet it becomes the more demanding: “All I ask, the heaven above/ and the road below me (emphasis mine).” Before line 15 the Vagabond is searching for or requesting (implied by the word “seek”) the heaven above and the road below him (meaning open air and freedom). The word “ask” is more emphatic and its use in the fourth octet

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311 See Susan Youens, *Retracing a Winter’s Journey: Schubert’s Winterreise* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. p. 17, for a more complete discussion of the Müller/Schubert wanderer. Here Youens says “The wanderer in *Die Winterreise* is not a legendary figure, but like all of Müller’s wanderers he is impelled to go forth into the world not by Romantic *Sehnsucht* (the longing within the spirit for that which is unattainable and unknown), but for other, darker reasons: *Wanderlust* (‘delight in wandering,’ or the compulsion to travel) undergoes a sea change in the hands of the latecomer Müller. In his use of a familiar subject—a journey undertaken in sorrow, Müller’s accomplishment is akin to that of Caspar David Friedrich, who painted the moonlit graveyards and hermit-inhabited ruins popular in his day but did so to unique and haunting effect.” See also Edward Michael Hafer, “The Wanderer Archetype in the Music of Franz Schubert and the Paintings of Caspar David Friedrich” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2006), esp. Ch. 1 “Introduction: The Many Faces of the Wanderer,” 1-16.
demands an answer. Demanding the heaven above and the road below, he is now more insistent about and sure of his goals.

Vaughan Williams sets the stage for the entire cycle in the six-measure introduction of “The Vagabond.” The left-hand chords that open the piece immediately provides the general character of the cycle. Stephen Banfield has called these opening measures “the endless plod of the traveler.” As the term “plod” suggests something laborious, something obligatory, or heavy laden, this may be a bit too strong. A word that would more accurately fit with the composer’s performing directions might be “tramp.” Vaughan Williams is very specific about how the accompaniment should be played, in order to give us the full picture of the Vagabond tramping across the countryside. The tempo marking is *Allegro moderato (alla marcia)* and he further instructs the pianist to play *ma sempre marcato*. Underneath the left hand chords, which are staccato, he specifies *sempre pesante il basso* (the only direction indicating weight). Even though the dynamic marking is *piano*, this is no wimpy or obligatory start to a journey. Vaughan Williams uses the right hand of the accompaniment and key signature to suggest the key of the piece as C minor (although the leading note is notably absent), and to foreshadow melodically what the singer will do in measure 7 (although here the phrase is extended to introduce an Aeolian modal flavor). Even the vocalist’s entrance is marked *risoluto*. The composer has left nothing to chance. The Vagabond is setting off on his journey and nobody will stop him. (See example 3.1.)

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312 Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 84.
Each subsequent mention of heaven involves a shift to E-flat minor chord (measures 37-39, and 75-77). (See example 3.2.)

This same shift occurs in settings of “There’s the life for a man like me” (mm. 17-18), “Give the face of earth around” (mm. 30-31) and, once again, “Give the face of earth around” (mm. 68-69), lines 7, 11, and 27 respectively. This suggests
how Vaughan Williams may have read the poem. In the first instance (“There’s the life for a man like me”), the protagonist has just finished describing his ultimate life, the life he wants, the life “for a man like me”—travelling down the infrequent path, bedding down in the outdoors, etc. This, to him, would be a form of paradise, thus Vaughan Williams set it as he did “heaven.” That such a life would have been heavenly to the protagonist is emphasized in multiple ways: the dynamic change from piano to forte in both the voice and piano; the register change in the vocal line; and, perhaps most important, the articulation and harmonic change in the accompaniment part. Also, the second half of measure 17 is the first time there is any change in the left-hand accompaniment pattern set up at the beginning of the piece. For the duration of six beats, the precise length required to sing “There’s the life for a man like me,” the bass-line abandons its ostinato in favor of a different contour that is slurred, only to return to its previous staccato ostinato at the word “me.” (See example 3.3.)

Example 3.3 “The Vagabond” mm. 17-19.

The same dramatic change accompanies each setting that references heaven (mm. 37-39 and 75-77). In the latter instance, the dynamic change is to fortissimo, emphasizing the change in text at that point from “seek” to “ask” (discussed
above). The other two appearances of E-flat minor involve the same text: “Give
the face of earth around,” (mm. 30-31 and 68-69); by their device, Vaughan
Williams underscores that, for the protagonist, the freedom of the open road is his
heaven.

The question of why Vaughan Williams chooses to use E-flat minor to
depict heaven is interesting, though one can only speculate about the answer. In
the appendix titled “Vaughan Williams and Musical Symbolism” in his book
*Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion*, Wilfrid Mellers states outright that:

> It is improbable that Vaughan Williams consciously reflected on
> the symbolism of key (and mode) which is so elaborately evident
> in his music, but the consistency of his approach fascinates. 313

Although Mellers does not discuss *Songs of Travel* or “The Vagabond,” the
notion that the composer was consistent in his use of key and mode prompts some
interesting things to consider. According to Mellers, Vaughan Williams (in the
*Sea Symphony* (1909)) uses C minor to indicate strife and E-flat major to indicate
that the journey is far from over. 314 If this is true, then might not a similar
argument be made about the remainder of the Vagabond’s journey, suggesting it
will be filled with both joy and despair? Additionally, what the Vagabond
perceives as heaven may be a journey that will continue, but not in the way he
will expect. Since “heaven” in this song is depicted as E-flat minor, it may be that

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Jenkins, 1989; London: Travers & Emery, 2009), 366. Page references are to the Travers &
Emery edition unless stated otherwise.

this journey is a sorrowful one (as indeed, it turns out to be—or at the very least, bittersweet).

A relationship between a particular harmony and a narrative element occurs when the vocal line veers toward G-flat major. For “And the byway nigh me,” Vaughan Williams tonicizes G-flat Major (Example 3.4, mm. 11-12), and at lines 12 and 28 (mm. 31-32 and 69-70), “And the road before me.”

Example 3.4. “The Vagabond,” mm. 11-12.

This phrase refers to the side road, the other way than the highway, the secluded or infrequent path. The next line, “And the road before me,” is also what he wants—in this case he wants that road despite what might happen. All three of

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315 The use of the flat V is a common Vaughan Williams trait. A. E. F. Dickinson provides an excellent discussion of this tendency in his book Vaughan Williams (see pages 25-27 in particular.) For a later example of Vaughan Williams’s use of the flat V, see his Symphony No. 4 (1934) in a chordal structure and his Symphony No. 9 (1957) in a melodic line.

316 This line is from the second octet of the poem. The first four lines of that octet, i.e. lines 9-12, read “Let the blow fall soon or late,/ Let what will be o’er me;/ Give the face of earth around/ And the road before me.” It is, I believe, the word “blow” that causes some consternation. According to the OED, it can mean a hard stroke with a hand or weapon or a blast, but it can also mean a state of blossoming or bloom. Both definitions were in use during Stevenson’s lifetime. From 1896, “A stroke, esp. a firm stroke; a violent application of the fist or of any instrument to an object” and in 1866 and 1895, “A state of blossoming; bloom.” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., (vol 2) s.v. “blow”, pp. 317 and 319.) As a point of reference, Matthew Arnold uses the term “blow” as “bloom” in 1866 in Thyris: “And stocks in fragrant blow” (line 66); see Matthew Arnold, “Thyris” in The Poems of Matthew Arnold 1840-1867 (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), 386. Furthermore, Stevenson uses the term “blow” as bloom in the poem “I will
these lines are set exactly the same way: the G-flat major chord is outlined in the vocal line and doubled by the upper-note in the right hand of the accompaniment. It is only on the first and third beats of the second measure of each example that we hear a full, root position G-flat major chord. While Dickinson does not include “The Vagabond” among the examples of Vaughan Williams’s use of the flat V, the composer seems to be using it here to underline a particular poetic idea.

The third stanza of the poem comprises the B section of the song, measures 44 through 59. It is here that everything changes, both in the poem and in the music. Textually, this is the first time the protagonist acknowledges the natural realities of living rough (the cold, the possibility of frost/snow). Vaughan Williams sets this text accordingly. Along with a key change to E minor (with flat leading note), and a tempo change to \textit{Animando}, the pianist and vocalist are both directed to perform \textit{robustamente}. According to Banfield, the mediant relationships in this song both govern the tonal structure of the piece and are proof of the composer’s continued study of and collecting of folksong where mediant relationships are prevalent.\textsuperscript{317} The movement from C minor to E flat minor in the song’s opening may be part of this, and the change of key in the third verse from make you brooches” (Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom,” line 6), which is also set by Vaughan Williams (as “The Roadside Fire”) and included in this cycle. Within the context of “The Vagabond” there is certainly evidence for either kind of blow. The Vagabond does seem to be preparing himself for the harshness of autumn and winter months in the third octet, so in that context the ‘blow’ could be a mental one or a physical one in the sense of dealing with harsh weather (i.e., a storm). On the other hand, the first time we come to this we are in the second octet and have not yet heard about the possibilities of autumn or winter yet, so it is quite possible that the ‘blow’ Stevenson and even Vaughan Williams is talking about is blossoming or bloom. (I mention this here because every singer that I have worked with, both student and professional, has read this as a physical attack and that seems so out of place in a poem and song where physical violence is found nowhere else and whose general theme is one of the desire for freedom.)

\textsuperscript{317} Stephen Banfield, \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, 84.
C minor to E minor goes along with the change of narrative. E minor (sharp mediant) is a long way from C minor, and might well mirror the harshness that comes from living rough. The sharp mediant hints at events to come that are a long way from the glories of the open road that the Vagabond envisions when he first sets out on his journey. (According to Mellers, in later works such as the Sixth and Ninth Symphonies, the key of E minor has painful connotations, and even purgatorial implications in the case of the Ninth symphony.\textsuperscript{318} Cold such as could silence “bird on tree,” frosty fields that are as white as meal, and blue fingers – ideas expressed in the third stanza of the poem - would certainly qualify as painful, although perhaps not purgatorial.) Vaughan Williams also portrays this shift in the accompaniment. For the first time he breaks up the quarter-note bass line that has thus far permeated the piece. In measure 46 he breaks this pattern with eighth notes for one complete measure, and then continues throughout the B section to alternate at various periods quarter notes and eighth notes in the bass line. The eighth notes lend a sense of urgency to this section, and combined with the increase in tempo, suggest that Vaughan Williams read the text as the protagonist being worried about the oncoming cold weather, or not wanting to dwell on the possible harshness to come. This is the loudest section of the song. It begins \textit{mezzo forte}, moves to \textit{forte}, then ends, left hand in eighth note octaves and right hand in eighth note chords underpinning the voice, once again to hit the highest note in the piece (E-flat, m. 60) to end the section triumphantly in \textit{fortissimo}, moving back to C minor (on the word “winter”) as the Vagabond

\textsuperscript{318} Wilfrid Mellers, \textit{Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion}, 368-369.
insists that he will not let winter bother him. The Vagabond’s assurance that winter will not dissuade him from his journey is further enhanced by the reappearance of the rising triplet motif in the right hand of the piano accompaniment (mm. 60 and 61). He will continue on his journey.

The return to C minor continues through the final verse of the song, which is a textual repetition of the second stanza of the poem. The Vagabond has regained his footing (so to speak) after contemplating the possible harsh reality to come, but this time he is more emphatic. As discussed above, the text is changed from “All I seek” to “All I ask,” a feature emphasized further by the tenuto marks and the fortissimo dynamic of the start of the phrase in measure 75. The four-measure postlude for piano (still in C minor) provides the listener with the sense of the Vagabond leaving on his journey, since the footsteps, pianissimo, die away by means of slowing rhythmic motion and a quarter-note rest in between each chord (mm. 82 and 83) before the piece finally comes to a rest.

“The Vagabond” also contains what Banfield refers to as “one of Vaughan Williams’s later fingerprints,” that is to say, triplets followed by duplets. In Banfield’s case, he was talking about “Youth and Love” (mm. 1-3; see example 3.13 on page 164 of this chapter), which does indeed contain this fingerprint. However, the close alternation of triplets and duplets is a feature that appears in every song of this cycle, with the exception of “In dreams.” Not every example is as clear-cut or easily detected as “Youth and Love.” Nevertheless, vestiges of the

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319 Stephen Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 85. At this point Banfield says specifically triplets followed by duplets, but the fingerprint works both ways, i.e., triplets followed by duplets and duplets followed by triplets. (While Banfield refers to this as a “later” fingerprint, he does not identify any later work in which the fingerprint appears.)
fingerprint exist and provide a musically unifying structure to the cycle that goes beyond the narrative. In “The Vagabond,” the fingerprint first appears in measures 7-8 in the vocal line.  (See example 3.5.)

Example 3.5 “The Vagabond” mm. 7-8, vocal line only.

Unlike “Youth and Love” where the triplets are immediately followed by the duplets, here the triplets appear in the first two beats of measure 7 and the duplets follow in the last two beats of measure 8. The right hand of the accompaniment joins in on the duplets. This happens again throughout the song, in measures 10-11, 27-28, 30-31, 65-66, and finally 68-69. (See example 3.6.)

Example 3.6. “The Vagabond” mm. 10-11.

In this song, the fingerprint seems to underscore the carefree nature of the Vagabond, because it is used to set the lines of the poem that most reveal his

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320 By this I mean that it rhythmically unifies the cycle. With or without the narrative, it provides a link between the songs.
laissez-faire attitude toward life. However the fingerprint is also heard in E-flat minor, the key of heaven (or what the Vagabond perceives as heaven) in this song. This bears remembering as we go through the cycle, since the fingerprint is used most prominently in the accompaniment in “Youth and Love,” the setting of the poem where the Vagabond falls in love.

“The Vagabond,” needing very little and free from encumbrance, sets off on a journey, ready to face the open road and all it has to offer. Dickinson claims that this song would never have been as popular as it was without (as he called it) “its stoic message of virtuous renunciation.”

IX “Let Beauty Awake” (poem IX)

Let Beauty awake in the morn from beautiful dreams,
Beauty awake from rest!
Let Beauty awake
For Beauty’s sake
In the hour when the birds awake in the brake
And the stars are bright in the west!

Let Beauty awake in the eve from the slumber of day,
Awake in the crimson eve!
In the day’s dusk end
When the shades ascend,
Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend
To render again and receive!

There is some difference of opinion over the identity of “Beauty” in “Let Beauty Awake” in the literature about the cycle. Larson, in his 2001 dissertation, identifies “Beauty” as “the narrator’s impression of nature as the embodiment of

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Beauty.” Hallmark, on the other hand, identifies “Beauty” indirectly. He explains that the positioning of this text within the entire narrative evokes “the dawn of romance in the vagabond’s life or [it can be] interpreted as the artist’s awakening to his calling.” Since the next song in the cycle describes the traveler’s imagined (?) life with his love, and later songs describe their break-up, it seems plausible that Vaughan Williams read “Beauty” as the name of the Vagabond’s love interest. Reading “Beauty” as the love interest would create a further tie with Lavengro, for Borrow’s traveler also meets his love interest while wandering, and they, too, suffer a break-up. As Lavengro was Vaughan Williams’s favorite novel, it makes sense that he would see this similarity between the texts. Since Vaughan Williams himself was quite the romantic, one could argue that he was likely to read the text in this manner.

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324 Vaughan Williams remained quite the romantic throughout his life. In her biography of her husband, Ursula Vaughan Williams provides some examples from his romantic nature prior to the composition of this song cycle: “All through his life Ralph was romantically susceptible to beauty, and at Cambridge he was as liable to fall in love as any one of his age. His first flame there was a girl who, he said, was not conventionally pretty, but most deliciously attractive. He met her at dances, at Sunday tea-parties and at tennis parties. Once Ralph Wedgewood accused him of faking the toss, so that he could partner her, and Ralph brazenly agreed that he had. This springtime fancy never grew beyond the quivering expectation of meeting and the melancholy rapture of parting at the end of dances. Nothing was said, and she remained a delightful memory. They never met again, though he knew when and whom she married, and even sixty years later the steps of her house recalled moments of tremulous expectation.” (p. 38) “Shyness, and the conventions of romance, the inaccessibility of distant beauty, almost in the medieval troubadour manner, were his natural element: this was a curious paradox in a man of passionate disposition and warm, human affection, who all his life enjoyed both the decorative gaieties and the lively companionship of women, all of whom gave him unchanging affection that a word from him could have warmed into far more. Brought up in the rigid moral code of his age, he admired the freer ways of others and of later generations but any physical indulgence was impossible or inhibited for him by his own inner discipline, which allowed flirtation, friendships, and emotional turmoils, but forbade anything that he thought might hurt or injure another person.” (Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 38-39).
This song’s opening suggests the key of F-sharp (Dorian) minor, and the song ends with an F-sharp minor arpeggio – although the key signature suggests C-sharp minor—and the text is set in A A\textsuperscript{1} form. Vaughan Williams may be using the tonal ambiguity to represent the sudden change in the Vagabond’s character: in the previous song he claimed he was not looking for love (“Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,” line 13 of “The Vagabond”) yet now he has found it. The tonal ambiguity may also represent the uncertainty the Vagabond feels about the relationship with Beauty. The differences between the settings of the two verses occur primarily in the accompaniment. In the A section (mm. 1-14) the accompaniment consists of ascending and descending arpeggios. The accompaniment of the A\textsuperscript{1} section (mm. 14-29) consists primarily of ascending arpeggios. (Obviously there are small changes in the vocal line to accommodate the text as well.) The composer only returns to the ascending/descending pattern in the left hand of the piano at measure 24, once the text is completed, for a postlude. (The harmonic progression is the same for both verses.) Larson says this song “may be viewed as a folk song in a\textsuperscript{1} a\textsuperscript{2} form.”\textsuperscript{325} While he lists other features that lead him to this conclusion, i.e., a lyrical vocal melody and what he views as simple arpeggiated accompaniment and the 9/8 meter,\textsuperscript{326} these qualities do not necessarily add up to a folk song, or even an art song in the style of a folk song—at least not in Vaughan Williams’s oeuvre. By the time Vaughan Williams


\textsuperscript{326} Matthew Larson, “Text/Music Relations in Ralph Vaughan Williams’ [sic] Songs of Travel: An Interpretive Guide,” 31.
wrote “Let Beauty Awake” (1904) he had met Cecil Sharp (director of the English Folk Song and Dance Society), and was collecting folksongs. In addition, the composer had already published two art songs (in 1901 and 1902) in The Vocalist that were purposefully written in folk song style and Vaughan Williams identified them as such (please see Chapter Two of this document for a full discussion). “Let Beauty Awake” resembles neither of them.

After declaring in the previous song that he did not need love, the Vagabond has met Beauty. She comes with beautiful dreams, the waking birds, bright stars, and a beautiful sunset (“crimson eve”). Her accompaniment, in contrast to that of the Vagabond’s quarter-note tramping motive, is full of continuous arpeggios. The tramping motive, a continuous, perpetual quarter-note beat (sometimes octaves, sometimes octaves plus the fifth or fourth scale degree) that permeated “The Vagabond” was an important part of hearing the Vagabond set off on his journey. This journey did not include love (“Wealth I seek not, hope nor love”). However, in “Let Beauty Awake” the Vagabond’s plans go awry. The arpeggios (i.e., broken chords) that introduce the song and continue throughout most of the piece may be seen as both a symbol of these broken plans and the symbol of Beauty herself as a manifestation of those broken plans. In addition, the delicate, harp-like arpeggiation may suggest a feminine beauty that is diametrically opposed to the tramping motive of the preceding song: the Vagabond falls in love, his earlier protestations notwithstanding.

The Vaughan Williams rhythmic fingerprint of triplets followed by duplets appears in a distinctive way here. Since this song is in 9/8 meter, the ‘triplets’ are then groupings of three eighth notes in compound meter, the duplets appearing as two eightths in single meter. The clearest example is in measure 18, corresponding to the text “In the day’s dusk end” (line 9). (See example 3.7.)

Example 3.7. “Let Beauty Awake” m. 18, vocal line.

Vaughan Williams chose to use the fingerprint at the beginning of an important moment in the text: “In the day’s dusk end / When the shades ascend, / Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend / To render again and receive!” (lines 9-12). Beauty and the Vagabond make love (“render again and receive”), and this passage is further set apart from the rest of the piece by the tremolos in the left hand of the piano that begin in the last beat of measure 18. The accompaniment does not return to the arpeggio pattern until measure 24, when the vocal line has finished singing the text.

XI “The Roadside Fire” (poem XI)

I will make you brooches and toys for your delight
Of bird-song at morning and star-shine at night.
I will make a palace fit for you and me
Of green days in forests and blue days at sea.

I will make my kitchen, and you shall keep your room,
Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom,
And you shall wash your linen and keep your body white
In rainfall at morning and dewfall at night.

And this shall be for music when no one else is near,
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!
That only I remember, that only you admire,
Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.

In this song the relationship with Beauty has progressed and the Vagabond,
in the excitement of love, wants to shower her with gifts (brooches and toys of
bird-song and star-shine, and a palace). These gifts are meant to show off the joy
and wonder of life as a vagabond.\(^{328}\) In fact, throughout the first two quatrains he
provides several reasons why she should remain by his side. The first quatrain
discusses what he alone will do for her (hence the mention of the gifts). In the
second quatrain he tries to entice her further by describing where and how they
will live. Her room will be by the sandy banks of the river where the yellow
flowers of the shrub, broom, grow. She will be able to wash herself and her
clothes in fresh rainwater and they will have a lovely life. In the third quatrain the
Vagabond solidifies his expectations and desires. He tells Beauty that this will be
their life: the two of them alone, with him singing of the road and the fire beside

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\(^{328}\) Here I disagree with Larson in two fundamental ways. First, I read this poem, as does Rufus
Hallmark, as a continuation of the relationship with Beauty as we, as an audience, were introduced
to in the previous poem, “Let Beauty Awake.” Second, Larson argues that there are two types of
what he refers to as “possessions” here: the material (brooches, palace, linen) and natural
(birdsong, green days, rainfall). It seems to me that the “possessions” are all natural. The
brooches and toys are of (i.e. made of) “bird-song at morning and star-shine at night”. Likewise,
the palace is of “green days in forests and blue days at sea,” that is to say, not a physical stone and
mortar palace. I do not include the linen mentioned by Larson as one of the material possessions
in my list of gifts because it is something already possessed by the woman. See Rufus Hallmark,
“Robert Louis Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their Songs of Travel,” 134 and Matthew
Larson, “Text/Music relations in Ralph Vaughan Williams’ [sic] Songs of Travel: An Interpretive
Guide,” 42.
it. It will be a fine life and a rare life, and one that he clearly expects her to revel in.

The Vagabond’s excitement about his new love is apparent in the accompaniment: what started the entire cycle in the initial song as a continual quarter-note Allegro moderato (alla marcia) in C minor is now a continual eighth-note Allegretto in D-flat major which the composer tells the pianist to play leggiero. Mellers does not mention D-flat major (or minor) in his discussion of the musical symbolism of Vaughan Williams. However, if C minor indicates strife, as discussed above, then perhaps D-flat major, its Neapolitan, can be understood as happiness or contentment. This is certainly expressed in the accompaniment, which is now moving at a lighter and quicker pace than in “The Vagabond,” the first song of the cycle. Also, the effect of the tonic pedal in the accompaniment for the first six measures of the song, and its periodic return (mm. 18 through 25, 37 through 39, and 58 through 63) are perhaps signs that the Vagabond has decided to settle down for a while. This possibility is borne out in the text in the second quatrain: “I will keep my kitchen, and you shall keep your room.” A kitchen and a room are (and were in Vaughan Williams’s generation) generally thought to be fixed structures. However, since the Vagabond was traveling, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that he is referring to locations within a campsite. (That is to say, “kitchen” and “room” as spaces within the camp designated for cooking or for certain individuals as “their space” or “their room.” There is no specific mention of tents or caravans, but these were a commonplace for Stevenson as well as Vaughan Williams.)
The form of the song (bar form) takes its cue from the form and content of the quatrains: AA\textsuperscript{1}B, the A section encompassing measures 1-19, A\textsuperscript{1} measures 20 through 40, and B measures 41 through 63. As with “Let Beauty Awake,” the difference between the A and A\textsuperscript{1} section here lies primarily in the accompaniment. Initially, both hands create an ostinato by alternating dyads through measure 19. The A\textsuperscript{1} section is distinguished from the A section by what Stephen Banfield calls a “boogie-woogie bass.”\textsuperscript{329} (See example 3.8.) Banfield is referring to the repeated running eighth-note pattern the left hand of the piano accompaniment: a feature that permeates measures 20 through 30. What he references is not really boogie-woogie. Boogie-woogie generally includes a two- to four-bar ostinato bass, utilization of the twelve-bar blues, and usually the right hand of the piano is improvising over this.\textsuperscript{330} While the vocal line of the of both A and A\textsuperscript{1} remain the same, the bass line of the A\textsuperscript{1} section (the running eighth notes, followed by whole note pedals) reminds us that Vaughan Williams reads the two quatrains as two separate (albeit similar) entities: the first is about the Vagabond enticing the woman with all the things he will do for her, and the second sees him

\textsuperscript{329}Stephen Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 84

\textsuperscript{330}For more complete definitions, please see Peter Gammond, "boogie-woogie," The Oxford Companion to Music, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed September 8, 2013, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.hillsdale.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e888 and Peter C. Muir, Peter C., "Boogie-woogie (i)," Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed September 8, 2013, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.hillsdale.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2228520. While this is technically not boogie-woogie, it is clear why Banfield called it that. The ostinato pattern is two bars long, it occurs in the bass of the piano, and there are running eighth notes. However the absence of the 12-bar blues pattern and the lack of improvisation mean we cannot really call it boogie-woogie. In addition, boogie-woogie is an American phenomenon that did not emerge until the 1920s (see the above definitions), so it is not really appropriate to use the term here.
extolling the beauties of the manner in which they will live together. The
accompaniment in A' can be seen as a mix of the two characters: the right hand
has the eighth-note dyad chords of the opening (which symbolize the Vagabond’s
happiness), and (at least for 10 measures) the left hand has running eighth notes,
which is close enough to the arpeggiation of “Let Beauty Awake” to symbolize
Beauty herself.

At the introduction to the B section (which begins properly at measure 41),
Vaughan Williams actually references the previous song, “Let Beauty Awake,”
with a return to the continuous arpeggiated chords which he had introduced in the
accompaniment there: compare measures 39 and 40 of “Roadside Fire” to
measure 5 and measure 15 to 16 in “Let Beauty Awake” (see examples 3.9 and
3.10).

Example 3.10. “Let Beauty Awake” mm. 15-16, piano only.

He also changes key from D-flat major to E major and he slows the tempo to *Meno mosso*, and, by measure 43 this piece that began staccato with so much excitement is rather slow and dignified. The text has changed at this point. The Vagabond is no longer talking of the gifts that he will give Beauty: this (i.e., their life) will be for them alone (“music when no one else is near,” line 9), and he will only remember (and she admire) the road, and the roadside fire. The Vagabond is assuming he and Beauty will settle down (“That only I remember, that only you admire, / Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.”: lines 11-12).

This change in sentiment, and the Vagabond’s change of plans, necessitates the change in both key and accompaniment.

It is also measure 43 where we see and hear the partial rhythmic fingerprint in the vocal line. In the first line of the third quatrain, “And this shall be for music when no one else is near,” Vaughan Williams sets “no one” as a triplet (see example 3.11), though without the duplet following it.
Example 3.11. “The Roadside Fire” m. 43.

He uses the full fingerprint (the triplet and the duplet) later on in measures 50 and 51 for the line “That only I remember, that only you admire,” setting “only you” to a triplet (this time reinforced in unison in the piano to create greater emphasis), with the duplet that follows it being heard only in the piano left hand. (See example 3.12.)


These are the only two instances of the fingerprint in this song, and the first I might not even mention were it not for the textual link. By itself it is merely a triplet. However, Vaughan Williams seems to be using the fingerprint here to
emphasize the isolation and intimacy of the couple (falling on the words “no one else” and “only you”), and to set the moment apart from the others (“And this shall be for music when no one else is near, / The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear! / That only I remember, that only you admire”). This is a continuation of his previous uses of the fingerprint. In “The Vagabond” Vaughan Williams used the rhythmic fingerprint for text that described what the Vagabond wanted out of life, or his carefree nature (the heaven above, the byway nigh, the earth around, the road before him), but also aspects about which he had no strong opinion (i.e., whether the blow fell sooner or later). The fingerprint appeared in the same key that Vaughan Williams used to denote heaven. In “Let Beauty Awake,” the composer used the gesture to reflect something pleasant. In that poem the Vagabond is listing all the manner of ways in which Beauty can wake. The last of these is “In the day’s dusk end” (which is set to the fingerprint) when she will wake to a kiss. This kiss, though, leads still further to their intimacy, for after the kiss (in the next song, “The Roadside Fire”) the Vagabond is talking about settling down with Beauty. It is only when we get to “The Roadside Fire” that Vaughan Williams uses the fingerprint to portray the love that he has for Beauty and to indicate that the Vagabond’s love for her has made him contemplate discontinuing his journey. (However, the Vagabond is still conflicted. Vaughan Williams gives us a further hint that he will at some point continue with his journey with the text painting in the last line: the word “stretches” (in the phrase “Of the broad road that stretches”) is set to a melisma elongated over almost two entire measures, with a stretching of the meter from
duple to triple, giving a sense of dislocation. The next three songs are in triple meter, and during these songs we find that the Vagabond has lost his love and has indeed continued on with his journey, so the metrical shift seems to be functioning as a pre-echo of things to come.) We return briefly to the exuberance of the opening of “The Roadside Fire” in the six-measure postlude, but by this point the blow has been dealt. The excitement of a newfound love, the tramping theme (sped up, of course), the dignity of this wandering life and impending sorrow are all present in this song.

III – Youth and Love – II (poem III)

To the heart of youth the world is a highwayside.
Passing for ever, he fares; and on either hand,
Deep in the gardens golden pavilions hide,
Nestle in orchard bloom, and far on the level land
Call him with lighted lamp in the eventide.

Thick as the stars at night when the moon is down,
Pleasures assail him. He to his nobler fate
Fares; and but waves a hand as he passes on,
Cries but a wayside word to her at the garden gate,
Sings but a boyish stave and his face is gone.

Once one becomes aware of Vaughan Williams’s rhythmic fingerprint, the continuous use of it in “Youth and Love” seems overwhelming. (Example 3.13 shows the ever-present fingerprint in the accompaniment of “Youth and Love,” albeit inverted so that the triplet follows duplets).
Example 3.13. “Youth and Love” mm. 1-3, the rhythmic fingerprint.

The song is in ABA\textsuperscript{1} form, and the ostinato accompaniment of the A section (mm. 1 through 32) is constructed entirely of this iteration of the fingerprint. The fingerprint also returns in the B section (mm. 33 through 55) at measures 42 through 44 and in the A\textsuperscript{1} section (mm. 56 through 63, which is really a postlude of A for the last five words of the poem) at 56 through 61. This means that exactly two-thirds of the accompaniment of this piece is composed of the fingerprint—the most it is used in a single song in the cycle.

“Youth and Love” is the turning point in the cycle’s narrative. It is at this point that the Vagabond decides to leave his Beauty and continue on his travels alone. Whether the Vagabond stays with Beauty or leaves is still ambiguous in the first quintet of the text—the A section of the song (the point at which Vaughan Williams employs the fingerprint). The key of G major, with the ostinato reinforcing an unstable second inversion tonic (even in the final measure), the tempo marking of Andante sostenuto, combined with the performance direction of expressivo tempo rubato and the dynamic marking of piano leave things uncertain—as if something is hinted at but never attained. (Mellers suggests that Vaughan Williams’s use of G major means that the voyage is far
from over. The example he provides is the finale of the *Sea Symphony* (1909), but the same could hold true for “Youth and Love.”

However, because of the tempo, the sentiment of the text, and the rhythmic ostinato in the accompaniment, the first verse is relaxed and pleasant to listen to.

It is only once we reach the second quintet in the text that it becomes clear that the Vagabond is leaving, and even then, it is only with the last line that it becomes a certainty. Vaughan Williams begins the B section (m. 33, marked *Poco animando*) with six measures of arpeggiation that recalls the rising and falling arpeggiation of “Let Beauty Awake.” The triplets of the right hand pitted against the duplets of the left can also be seen as a way to articulate the two parts of the fingerprint simultaneously. While in other contexts this could be just be a standard two against three, reading this as the fingerprint is plausible. Since Vaughan Williams seems to have understood this moment as a turning point for the Vagabond, much as he did in “Let Beauty Awake” (the arpeggios in measures 1-8, 9-14, and 24-27 of “Let Beauty Awake” – which symbolized his broken plans and the idea of beauty and the feminine – are mimicked in “Youth and Love”).

“Let Beauty Awake” was a song of extreme happiness for the Vagabond, so recalling part of it here is very important. In “Youth and Love” the passage in question is set in E major (for these six measures at least). The only other time in the entire cycle where there is use of E major is briefly in “Let Beauty Awake” (in bar 5, and on the first beat of bars 18 and 23) and “The Roadside Fire”—near the

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beginning of the B section (which begins at measure 41) at measure 44. One of Allan Atlas’s doctoral students, in an unpublished seminar paper, “Narrative vs. the Narrated in Vaughan Williams’s *Songs of Travel,*” noted the relationship between measure 5 of “Let Beauty Awake” and measure 44 of “The Roadside Fire,” based on their similar piano figuration and the use of E major.  

In his study of Vaughan Williams and musical symbolism, Mellers notes that the key of E major is rarely used by the composer, and when it is, it typically refers to heaven or something heavenly or a feeling of bliss which is rarely attained.

Hence, the recollection of “Let Beauty Awake” via the arpeggios in the accompaniment, together with the key of E major, suggests to me that Vaughan Williams understood the relationship between the Vagabond and the woman as extremely desirable but ultimately unattainable. The Vagabond originally embarked on this journey because of a deep desire to be free, to travel the open road. He had already left his home, family and friends behind him, so the desire to be free would likely be stronger than the desire to be committed to a relationship that would tie him down.

At measures 12 and 39 the piano quotes the opening rising motif from the accompaniment of “The Vagabond” (see example 3.1, page 143). At measure 12, Vaughan Williams uses it underneath the text “Passing for ever, he fares” (first half of line 2; see example 3.14), specifically under the word “ever.” At this point, “the world is a highwayside” (from line 1), and the Vagabond is being reminded

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of his purpose in setting out on his journey: his desire to be free. In measure 39, the “Vagabond” motif is used right before the voice enters with the text “He to his nobler fate/ Fares.” This reference to the opening song of the cycle, combined with the text “nobler fate,” suggests that Vaughan Williams wants to paint the Vagabond as remembering his original purpose in setting out, and his commitment to eschew love: in that song he sang: “Wealth I seek not, hope nor love;/ Nor a friend to know me;/ All I seek the heaven above/ And the road below me” (emphasis mine).

Example 3.14 “Youth and Love” m. 12 (quotes “The Vagabond”)

The Vagabond realizes at the Piu mosso at measure 45 what Allan Atlas calls “the climax…musical and dramatic, structural and emotional” of “Youth and Love:” that he is leaving. Both the voice and the piano are at fortissimo, the first time in the song, and along with a booming low octave D in the left hand of the piano (m. 45), the right hand clearly recollects the vocal line from “The

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Roadside Fire,” “I will make you brooches and toys for your delight.” It can be done openly now, as it is clear he is leaving and the musical reference is in connection with a direct textual one. In the next line he even refers to it as a “boyish stave.” Only after all three previous songs have been referenced does Vaughan Williams return (at the Tempo I in measure 56; the onset of the A’ section) to the fingerprint, the ostinato from the A section, and the second inversion triad (i.e., the withheld root position chord) at the text “and his face is gone.” The movement even ends with this chord: the Vagabond has made his decision to leave, but he is not at all sure about his decision, and his unhappiness is borne out in the next song in the cycle.

IV “In Dreams” (poem IV)

In dreams, unhappy, I behold you stand
As heretofore:
The unremembered tokens in your hand
Avail no more.

No more the morning glow, no more the grace,
Enshrines, endears.
Cold beats the light of time upon your face
And shows your tears.

He came and went. Perchance you wept a while
And then forgot.
Ah me! but he that left you with a smile
Forgets you not.

The Vagabond has left his Beauty, and even though this was his decision it has thrown him into sadness. He imagines that the gifts that he has given her now not only mean nothing to her, but that she no longer even remembers them. He is dreaming, and in his dreams the morning light that used to emphasize the
loveliness of her face now shows her aging and her tears. That he is dreaming is evident in the third quatr
ain when there is a quick shift in the text as he very simply states what happened in the previous songs (“He came and went.”; line 10), and his self-doubt returns. He thinks that she perhaps mourned him briefly, but then forgot him. He, on the other hand, has not forgotten her. Even though it was his decision to leave Beauty and continue on his journey, he is in agony over that decision (“Ah me! but he that left you with a smile…”).

In discussing Vaughan Williams’s setting of this poem, Banfield claims it is “something of a chromatic experiment, too overlaid with self-pity to be an entirely successful reading of the poem; it is difficult to see where Vaughan Williams may have got this style from.” It is true that there are many things about Vaughan Williams’s setting of “In Dreams” that sets it apart from the rest of the cycle. It is the only song in the cycle that does not begin on a strong downbeat, and it is the only song in the cycle in which the composer does not use the rhythmic fingerprint. It is also the only song in which Vaughan Williams uses such extensive chromaticism—in some cases so extensive and for such a long period of time (considering that the song is only 45 measures long) as to lose the sense of a tonal center.

For this song Vaughan Williams chooses the key signature of C minor, the same as the opening song and a key that, according to Mellers, represents “human strife tending to darkness.” However, the song never strongly cadences to

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335 Stephen Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 85.

establish a firm tonic minor (the opening chord sits in second inversion), and the
tonality is ambiguous. The form of the song is ABA\(^1\). These sections correspond
to the quatrains of the poem; the A section encompasses measures 1 through 13,
the B section encompasses the pickup to measure 14 through measure 24, and A\(^1\)
covers measures 25 through 45. This text explores the lowest emotional point in
the narrative (hence the suggestion of C minor), and the composer’s extensive use
of chromaticism embodies that emotional turmoil. The syncopated pedal notes
that continue through most of the song aid the turmoil by helping the piece feel
slightly ‘off.’ Not only is the tonal center uncertain, but the rhythmic center is
uncertain (the piece begins with the syncopated pedal notes in the accompaniment
on the off-beat).

As the song opens, Vaughan Williams hearkens back to the opening of the
cycle by building the line up C – Eb/G – Bb and falling back to G. However, in
the first song of the cycle, these notes were the confident melody of a Vagabond
starting out on his journey. Here, they are accompanimental, combined and
interspersed with other notes, no longer confident. Vaughan Williams makes
meaningful use of chromaticism almost immediately after the voice enters. On
the downbeat of measure 3, the composer creates a dissonance over a bassline F-
sharp on the word “dreams.” Even if the phrase were not “In dreams unhappy,” it
would be clear that something was very wrong. This dissonance (actually an
implied 13\(^{th}\) chord in first inversion) occurs again in measure five on the second
syllable of the word “behold,” and then in the A\(^1\) section in measures 27, 28 and
38 on the words “came,” the second syllable of “(per-)chance” and “(for)gets.”
These words are part of some of the most poignant phrases of the poem: “In dreams, unhappy, I behold you stand / As heretofore: (lines 1 and 2), “He came and went. Perchance you wept a while and then forgot.” (lines 9-10), and “Ah me! but he that left you with a smile / Forgets you not.” (lines 11-12) (emphasis mine). Each instance of this chord indicates deep pain: unhappy dreams; watching you stand as before; arriving only to leave again; perhaps weeping, then forgetting.

The most extensive use of chromaticism occurs when it is most clear that the text is a dream, when the second quatrain describes how the same light that used to show the woman’s grace and beauty now shows her aging and her tears. Here the composer uses a chromatic descending vocal line and chromaticism in the inner voices of the accompaniment, such as in measure 14 (and its pickup), to set the text “No more morning glow,” and in measure 19 for “Cold beats the light of time;” we also encounter the pungent chord discussed above in A’: measure 17 with “enshrines, endears,” (as in “no more the grace enshrines, endears.”). Still another descending chromatic line appears at measures 34-35 setting “but he that left you…” All of these features are used to suggest the inner turmoil that the Vagabond is experiencing. We only return to C minor at the end of the song, briefly, on the third beat of measure 37 at “forgets you not,” and then in the last two measures of the piece; but even then the return to C minor finds the second inversion of the chord in the penultimate measure, only decreasing to the solitary pitch of a low C in the last measure. This is hardly a confident cadence, just as
Another important item that sets this song apart from the others in the cycle is that textually this is the only piece that does not mention any rural setting or place, or indeed any kind of rural activity. Likewise it does not reference any of the phenomena mentioned in the other songs in the cycle that one might encounter or see while being a vagabond or living on the open road (stars in the sky, the heavens above, landscape, brush, trees, etc.). The total focus of this piece is the depth of the Vagabond’s unhappiness—not the journey, not the freedom, nor the glories of the open road, nor even the discovery of a newfound love and the delights of sharing with her the joys of the countryside. This total focus on

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the Vagabond’s sorrow and the dreamstate he is in is cause for Vaughan Williams to set the song apart from the rest of the cycle. While Banfield may see this piece as an “unsuccesful” reading of the poem, I see it as a narrative and even musical necessity. Each song in the first part of this cycle has thus far built momentum to a certain point, via the use of the rhythmic footprint, via the occasional return to E major, and via the budding relationship between the Vagabond and Beauty. That transformative moment occurred in “Youth and Love” with the extensive use of the fingerprint, the final decision with regard to Beauty, and, once again, a return to E major (which, as discussed in the previous songs, refers to the Vagabond’s broken plans, the idea of beauty and the feminine, and the idea that Beauty is highly desirable but ultimately unattainable.\textsuperscript{337}) “In Dreams” is needed to resolve that part of the narrative, and to clear the air, musically speaking.

VI “The Infinite Shining Heavens” (poem VI)

The infinite shining heavens
Rose and I saw in the night
Uncountable angel stars
Showering sorrow and light.

I saw them distant as heaven,
Dumb and shining and dead,

\textsuperscript{337} My discussion here corresponds to Allan Atlas’s argument that the first four songs of this cycle comprise a mini-cycle. Atlas also mentions the E major parallelism, however, he also views the E major sections as coming “very close to forming the central axis of its respective song if we use real-clock (that is, actual performance) time as the measuring rod.” (See Allan Atlas, “Vaughan Williams’s Songs of Travel: A Note on the Structural Role of the Thematic Recollections in Songs 4 and 9,” 109). Hallmark also links these four songs as a group by hearing an outer pair of closely related keys, C minor and G major (songs 1 and 4), and the two inner pair of keys, F-sharp minor and D-flat as ‘foreign’ (songs 2 and 3). He uses the same pairing and explains that songs 1 and 4 occur in the present while songs 2 and 3 occur in the past. (See Rufus Hallmark, “Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their Songs of Travel,” 134 and n. 20.)
And the idle stars of the night
Were dearer to me than bread.

Night after night in my sorrow
The stars stood\(^{338}\) over the sea,
Till lo! I looked in the dusk
And a star had come down to me.

Our Vagabond is becoming himself once again. He has left his love and romance behind him and has begun to emerge from the morass of sorrow, once more able to notice things in nature: the heavens, stars, the sea, and the dusk. (This is the first mention of heaven since the opening song, “The Vagabond.”) He is even able to recognize the beauty of what he sees around him, although his view is tinged with sadness, as in “Showering sorrow and light” (line 4) and “Dumb and shining and dead” (line 6). However, he is finally able to extricate himself from the grief that had engulfed him in “In Dreams”: “I looked in the dusk/And a star had come down to me” (lines 11 and 12). The poem is constructed of three quatrains, and with each quatrain the Vagabond moves further away from the complete and utter sorrow of the previous song. In the first quatrain, while he notices the heavens and sees the stars and their beauty, he only sees them as “sorrow and light.” In the second quatrain they become “dearer to [him] than bread.” By the last quatrain, instead of remaining distant, one of the stars has even come down to the Vagabond.

Vaughan Williams reads this poem as the Vagabond still recovering from his loss of Beauty, but also sees the Vagabond as getting back on the road. There are several musical clues to this fact. He structured his song to mimic the

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\(^{338}\) Vaughan Williams changes this word to ‘looked’ in his setting.
increasing level of recovery as described in the preceding paragraph: ABC. And unlike the last song, here the composer begins the piece on the downbeat. We are still in nebulous territory, though, for the downbeat is *pianissimo, molto legato* half notes in 3/2 time, in *Andante sostenuto* no less. Additionally, the tonal center is hard to determine. Michael Kennedy identifies this song as being in D modal minor,\(^\text{339}\) but it opens on a unison A, and even when it does reach D minor in measure two and then again on the third beat of measure three, it does not remain in D minor for long, nor does Vaughan Williams give us a firm cadence in D minor. Also, only the chord on the second beat of measure two is in root position. It is the only root-position D minor chord in the entire song, although there are other D minor harmonies. The lack of a confident tonal center reflects the fact that this is not the confident Vagabond that we saw and heard in the opening song, but he is the Vagabond nonetheless. His once steady quarter-note tramping motive is slowed to a pulsating half-note harmonic rhythm (suggesting a slow footfall on the road), and, once again, the composer makes use of the rhythmic fingerprint. Here it appears right away in the vocal line during the opening phrase “The infinite shining heavens,” specifically for the second and third words of that phrase. (Example 3.16.)

Example 3.16. “In Dreams,” m. 3, vocal line.

\(^{339}\) Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 25. With B-flat in the key signature, it is possible he means Aeolian mode on D.
There are other points throughout the piece where a version of the fingerprint occurs (see examples 3.17, mm. 25 through 26, and 3.18, mm. 38 through 39), but none are as clear as the one that appears at the beginning of the song. The others are generally clear on the page visually, but are not so clearly articulated aurally. That is to say, duplets precede the triplets (as in “Youth and Love”), and one of the duplet note values is held over from a previous articulation.


All of these appear in the vocal line—none in the accompaniment. In each of these three instances, the fingerprint is used to denote a place, an estimation of the worth of an object, or for the action of observing an object: “infinite shining heavens,” “the idle stars of the night were dearer to me than bread,” and “I looked in the dusk and a star had come down to me” (emphasis mine), and they are all referencing the stars. This is a change from its use before “Youth and Love,” where its association was always with the Vagabond or his love of Beauty.
Compared with the frequency of its appearance in “Youth and Love,” where exactly two thirds of the accompaniment was constructed of the fingerprint, the fact that all three appearances of the fingerprint are in the vocal line might seem to be stretching a point. However, when paired against the complete absence of the gesture in the preceding song, it would seem to be indicating that the Vagabond is indeed recovering.

As hinted above, one might say that the consistent half-note beat, independent of the meter changes that occur (in measures 6, 34, and 37) and continue throughout the entirety of the song until the last two measures, are reminiscent of that quarter note “plod of the tramper” that were heard in the opening song. Now the plod is slow, but the links to the Vagabond who originally set out on his journey is there. By the end of the song we get the sense that the Vagabond is back. This is confirmed by the D major arpeggio in penultimate measure and the resultant last D major chord in the upper register of the piano. This is not the brazen Vagabond (it is only a pianissimo D major), but he has been restored. The use of D major at this point is striking after several (45) measures of tonal uncertainty. This abrupt and unexpected harmonic change (and settling on a certain tonal center, after a plagal cadence (perhaps the ‘amen’ resolution to the piece, even it if only lasts for the two final measures), is confirmation that the Vagabond has come to terms with his life and his decision after a period of doubt and uncertainty. Mellers explains that for Vaughan Williams D major was “the key of power and glory”\(^{340}\) and in his later work was

“...a key of human fulfillment, which may or may not contain hints of transcendence.”  

This particular song is not necessarily about power and glory, and the Songs of Travel is not a later work; however overcoming tremendous sorrow is both triumphant and transcendent, and therefore arguably worthy of the D major triad at the end.

The composer even employs some text painting. In the third (the most upbeat) quatrain, on the phrase “And a star had come down to me,” Vaughan Williams begins a chromatic descent in the bass line of the piano part. The chromatic decent starts in measure 42 exactly as the voice sings the word “down” and ends in measure 45 when the voice releases the high D on the word “me.”

**XVI “Whither must I Wander” (To the tune of Wandering Willie)** (poem XVI)

Home no more home to me, whither must I wander?  
Hunger my drive, I go where I must.  
Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather;  
Thick drives the rain, and my roof is in the dust.  
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree.

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342 Stephen Banfield says, “The effect of the ending is perfectly gauged; it sounds right, even though it is difficult to explain why the music has to go up as the star comes down.” (Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 85) I believe he is talking about the following measure, measure 46, which is an ascending arpeggiated D major triad which leads up to the final chord of the piece. Banfield apparently missed the descending chromatic line that I mentioned above, but in all fairness, he was looking at an extraordinarily large number of songs.

343 Stevenson is referencing a folk tune, but Vaughan Williams did not use “Wandering Willie” as the basis of “Whiter must I Wander.” The New York Public Library currently has Robert Louis Stevenson’s papers, including Stevenson’s autograph ms transcription of the folk song “Wandering Willie”. Please see http://www.nypl.org/ead/576#idp112656, accessed September 13, 2013 for more details. Thanks are due here to Maurine McCourry, technical services librarian at Hillsdale College for assisting me in navigating the archives of the New York Public Library. See also http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a67wuqAAMg for a recorder rendering of Stevenson’s transcription of “Wandering Willie”.

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The true word of welcome was spoken in the door –
Dear days of old, with the faces in the firelight,
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child.
Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland;
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.
Now, when day dawns on the brow of the moorland,
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed,
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.

Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moorfowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers;
Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours;
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood –
Fair shine the day on the house with open door;
Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney –
But I go for ever and come again no more.

In this poem, the Vagabond has either returned to his childhood home or he is remembering what it was like to live there. The comparisons between his former life and his current one are stark indeed, for now he is experiencing the hunger and the cold and, since he left his love behind, he is also experiencing these hardships alone. His childhood home, by contrast, was always warm, lit with a fire, and full of friends. These memories are happy ones, but memories are all they are. Just as the Vagabond has left home, so has everyone he used to associate with his home. Now it is an empty house and the Vagabond will never return to the life he had as a child.

Stevenson constructed this poem in three verses of eight lines each, and each octet contains two distinct quatrains. In the first two octets, the quatrains serve to represent the past and the present for the Vagabond, contrasting where he
is and what he is experiencing with a like experience in his childhood. The first
two octets are structured thus: present, past (first octet); past, present (second
octet). The third octet also contains two quatrains, but Stevenson does not end the
first quatrain with a full stop as he did with the previous two. Instead he uses a
semi-colon. (In the score, Vaughan Williams changes this to a full-stop, most
likely to make the punctuation coincide with the previous two octets.) The other
difference between this octet and the former two is that this one remains in the
present tense for both quatrains. It is in this third octet that the Vagabond
realizes/announces that he will never again return home, but his life will continue
on, just as spring will continue to come again. Hallmark reads this as the artist
accepting his past with equanimity:

Now that he has found his own place in the world, he can accept
the past with equanimity in ‘Whither must I Wander?’ He will
still go on forever and come again no more, but now he can
contemplate his past with equanimity. The springtime of creativity
(third stanza) always returns.344

Vaughan Williams followed Stevenson’s poetic form in his setting, and at
the end of each octet there is a double bar that marks the end of the section. As
already mentioned, this was the first song of the cycle that the composer set, and
he published it, along with “Linden Lea” and “Blackmware by the Stour” in The
Vocalist in June 1902.345 As we saw in the previous chapter, “Linden Lea” and
“Blackmware by the Stour” were both subtitled “A Dorset Song,” and with texts

344 Rufus Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and their Songs of
Travel,” 134.

345 “Linden Lea” was published in April 1901 and “Blackmware by the Stour” in May 1902. See
by William Barnes who wrote them in Dorset dialect. Both were written in the style of a folksong. “Whither must I wander?,” while not by Barnes and not a text in the Dorset dialect, does share many musical and folksong-like features of the other two songs published in *The Vocalist*, particularly “Linden Lea.” “Whither must I Wander?” is strophic, in C minor,\(^{346}\) and more stable tonally than the previous songs, and the vocal line is often doubled in the right hand of the piano.

“Whither must I Wander” was written earlier (1902) than the other songs in the cycle, and shares some compositional elements with songs that the composer wrote earlier. For example, in both “Whither must I wander?” and “Blackmwore by the Stour” Vaughan Williams uses an abundance of parallel thirds (see examples 3.19, “Whither must I wander?,” m. 1, and 3.20, “Blackmwore by the Stour,” mm. 62-63).

Example 3.19. “Whither must I wander?” m. 1, piano only (parallel thirds)

Example 3.20. “Blackmwore by the Stour,” mm. 62-63, piano only (parallel thirds).

In addition, the accompaniment style of “Linden Lea” and “Whither must I Wander” is quite similar: the piano introduction of “Linden Lea” begins in a low register, and the introduction of “Whither must I Wander?” begins high (i.e., both open with an extreme register); once the verse begins, the accompaniment is largely eighth-note propulsion; both “Whither must I Wander?” and “Linden Lea” have moments in the texts (and thus in the scores) when the protagonist has what might be called a moment of self-realization. In “Whither must I Wander?” it is that moment in the second octet at the start of the second quatrain when the Vagabond returns to the present in his musings, “Now when day dawns on the brow of the moorland, / Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.” Vaughan Williams acknowledges this moment in the score by the performance direction risoluto, and a forte G minor open rolled quarter-note chord in the accompaniment (m. 31). At the comparable place in the first octet (mm. 12 through 15), the Vagabond moves from the present to the past and is remembering his house: “Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree. / The true word of welcome was spoken in the door” (lines 5 and 6). While in the second octet he comes to a moment of realization about himself, in the first octet he comes to a
moment of realization about his childhood home.) The first two verses of the song are marked off further by the composer when he has the third section, measures 41 through 58, which corresponds to the third octet of the text, begin pianissimo with the piano in its upper register, creating a stark contrast with the previous two verses. The corresponding section in “Linden Lea,” to the text “Let other folk make money faster / In the air of dark-room’d towns,” begins at measure 42, which the composer set apart from the rest of the piece by marking it Animato, and by the use of staccato chords in the beginning of the accompaniment for this section.  

As stated earlier, Stevenson keeps the text of the third octet of “Whither must I wander?” in the present tense, unlike the other two. Vaughan Williams reads this distinction as the Vagabond’s realization that life will continue, and that he will go on, but never return to his childhood. To do this musically he sets this section apart from the rest of the song by keeping the voice in the same register, but moving the right hand of the piano up an octave register. It is also in this section that we encounter the single instance of the rhythmic fingerprint in this song—in measure 44 at the word “flowers” in the right hand of the piano (see example 3.21). Since this was the first song composed in the cycle, this is the first time the composer used the fingerprint. At first sight, the use of the fingerprint with the word “flowers” may seem insignificant, compared to the previous examples, where it was used with text that described the Vagabond’s carefree nature, his love for Beauty (or his love with Beauty), or for an object

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347 As the remainder of the text of “Linden Lea” talks about being free to go abroad or to go home, this song could also fit well within the gypsy/wandering/vagabond genre.
worthy of observation. Here, though, the fingerprint is used within a section of text that denotes the renewal of life: “Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moorfowl, / Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers; (lines 17-18, emphasis mine). Since this was perhaps the composer’s first use of the fingerprint ever, it is possible that he had not yet determined how it was to be exploited. Also, he set a precedent with this song by using the fingerprint to denote the importance of a section of text. As we saw in the previous song, “The Infinite Shining Heavens,” the composer is not always highlighting a specific word but a section of text when he uses the fingerprint.

Example 3.21 “Whither must I wander?,” mm. 44-45, piano only.

When “Whither must I Wander?” first came out it was very successful. Banfield considers it the best of the cycle, and speculates that it was the success of the song that instigated the composer to base a cycle around it.  

348 Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 86.
XIV “Bright is the Ring of Words” (poem XIV)

Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
When the singer sings them.
Still they are caroled and said –
On wings they are carried –
After the singer is dead
And the maker buried.

Low as the singer lies
In the field of heather,
Songs of his fashion bring
The swains together.
And when the west is red
With the sunset embers,
The lover lingers and sings
And the maid remembers.

This song is about the inevitability of death or, as Hallmark puts it, the moment when the Vagabond (or artist, in his terms) “acknowledges…his own mortality.” The Vagabond realizes that he will not live forever, but the songs he sings will live on—they will be sung by others (“Still they are caroled and said—/ On wings they are carried—”). To him, these songs are important, for they bring lovers together (“Songs of his fashion bring/ The swains together.”). They have also been so significant to them that when the Vagabond sings for the last time, Beauty, his great love, will hear and remember him and all that he meant.

For many years “Bright is the Ring of Words” was the closing piece to Songs of Travel. As such it rounds off the cycle nicely; Vaughan Williams begins

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with a *forte* open position D major chord,\(^{350}\) then he very nearly returns to the same kind of steady, rhythmic stability of the opening song—but only nearly. Here, the would-be consistency of a quarter-note motive is interrupted by the occasional dotted rhythm or half note, as well as thirteen different time signatures (shifting from 3/4 to C and even 5/4) within the forty-measure piece. The Vagabond likewise has nearly returned to his confident state, although this confidence is tinged with greater knowledge of life than he had previously. He has never returned to the carefree, exuberant confidence that was in evidence in the first three songs.

The form of the song is AA' and corresponds to the form of the poem. In the poem, which consists of two octets, living comprises the first quatrain of each, and endings (and dying) the second. In setting both of the first quatrains Vaughan Williams chose to represent living with a tonal center of D major and death with E-flat major suggesting through this juxtaposition, as he does in the later *Sea Symphony* (1909), that “the voyage is far from over.”\(^{351}\) The first quatrain (mm. 1-9) opens with block chords, *risoluto at forte*. The Vagabond has yet to sing (and the listener has yet to hear) anything about death. Measures 10 through 19 correspond to the second quatrain of the first octet. Here the dichotomy between

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\(^{350}\) Vaughan Williams originally composed the songs in the keys mentioned in this dissertation, which corresponds with Boosey & Hawkes’s complete edition for low voice, with the exception of this particular song. Michael Kennedy lists it as D major, the original key in which Vaughan Williams composed it, while it is in C major in Boosey & Hawkes complete edition for low voice, and F major in Boosey & Hawkes complete edition for high voice. (See Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 25.) James Day also discusses this song in its original key of D major. (See James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, 113.) Despite Boosey & Hawkes publications in C major and F major, from this point on I will discuss this song in its original key of D major.

life and death is not so harsh as one might expect: the two-measure D major arpeggio that Vaughan Williams uses to set the word ‘buried’ indicates (if we accept Mellers’s argument about keys) that he believes the Vagabond is hopeful. There is the possibility of life after death (i.e., “the voyage is far from over”).

The beginning of the second octet (m. 20), however, is quite different. Physically the Vagabond (singer) is lying low, and even though (he says) his songs bring lovers together, this is, once again, not the brash, confident wayfarer of the early songs in the cycle. This is the Vagabond who has come to terms with his own impending death and what that death might mean. The rolled pianissimo chords that open the first half of the second octet (which lasts from measures 20 through 27) were prepared by the two measure pianissimo D major arpeggio that accompanied the word buried.

The second quatrain of the second octet is not about death, per se, but about the sunset of life and Vaughan Williams sets this section (beginning at measure 28) with a tonal center of B major. He does not return to E-flat major until measure 34, at the beginning of the phrase “The lover lingers and sings.” The remainder of the phrase is set over an F minor harmony, which, again, if we accept Mellers’s argument about keys, is equated with funeral experience. Since this song was possibly the original ending of the cycle, this would have been a measure or two of reflection or farewell. There is a moment when, in measure 38 the vocalist is singing the first three words and the first syllable of the fourth word of “And the maid remembers” in D major, and the piano is not in D major until measure 39 (penultimate measure). This is also the last time the composer uses
the rhythmic fingerprint in the cycle (here in the accompaniment, m. 39), and the only time he uses it in this song. (See example 3.22.) It is particularly poignant here, since it appears at the moment when Beauty is remembering (or being remembered), and it was used so prominently during “Youth and Love.” Note, too, that the last D major chord is not in root position, but in second inversion. Reverting back to D major assures us that the journey is far from over, as well as the lack of a concrete, root-position tonic chord.

Example 3.22. “Bright is the Ring of Words,” mm. 39-40.

If this had remained the last song, the cycle would have ended logically. The whole cycle would have moved from C minor to D major, and in Meller’s interpretation of Vaughan Williams’s use of musical symbolism, this could indicate a journey from strife to power and glory. Perhaps it would be better to read this here as a journey from discontentment to contentment and acceptance. Text aside, the piano part calls to mind the style of accompaniment of many of the previous songs in the cycle, even if Vaughan Williams does not reference them specifically as he does in the next song, and, it turns out, the real final song of the

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cycle. The strong quarter-note chordal opening reminds us of “The Vagabond” (see example 3.23), the arpeggios call to mind “Let Beauty Awake” and “The Roadside Fire” (see example 3.24), the rolled chords of measures 20-22 hearken back to “The Infinite Shining Heavens” (see example 3.25), and the use of thirds in measures 10-13 and 28-31 reminds us obliquely of “Whither must I Wander?” (see example 3.26 and 3.27).

Example 3.23. “Bright is the Ring of Words,” m. 2, piano only

Example 3.24. “Bright is the Ring of Words,” mm. 18-19, piano only.

Example 3.25. “Bright is the Ring of Words,” mm. 20-22, piano only.
As already stated, the penultimate measure also references the all-important fingerprint in the only moving part in that measure. This fingerprint has meant so much to this cycle, appearing in every song but the most desolate one. To include it here at the point where memories of Beauty come to the fore is clever, for it indexes all the other fingerprints that have come before it. Lastly, by ending the voice and piano parts at the same time on a single chord is quite a striking move and an appropriate ending for a cycle. The rising arpeggio (which includes the fingerprint) at the end of a piece is a hallmark of the composer (see again example 3.23). He had already used it in “The Infinite Shining Heavens,” and would continue to use it later in his career with Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis (1910), The Lark Ascending (1920), “Pretty Bess” from Five Tudor Portraits (1935), and Serenade to Music (1938). Had the next song not been found after
the composer’s death, this cycle would have still been a successfully coherent composition.

**XXII “I have trod the upward and the downward slope” (poem XXII)**

I have trod the upward and downward slope;  
I have endured and done in days before;  
I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope;  
And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

At the end of his journey, the Vagabond realizes that life on the open road was more difficult than he had imagined. He got his freedom, he got the road before him, but in doing so he lost his love and his home. A note at the bottom of the published score says “This little epilogue to the Song Cycle “Songs of Travel” should be sung in public only when the whole cycle is performed”. This advice should always be adhered to because this song is a true epilogue. The poem itself is only four lines long, and the song is only 25 measures long, 10 of which are for piano alone. This is also an epilogue in the sense that both the text and the musical setting reference specifically that which has gone before; without having heard the previous songs, this song quite possibly would make little sense alone.

Vaughan Williams specifically references previous songs here in a way that he did not in “Bright is the Ring of Words.” He opens in much the same way as he opened the cycle, with the rising triplet Vagabond motive in the right hand of the piano part, and quarter-note octaves (without the infilling fifth) in the left hand. But whereas the original song was in C minor and in an **Allegro**

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353 Allan Atlas briefly discusses the internal musical references to other songs in the cycle in “I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope” in his article “Vaughan Williams’s *Songs of Travel*: A Note on the Structural Role of the Thematic Recollections in Songs 4 and 9,” 118.
moderato (alla marcia) sempre marcato, this one is in D minor and Andante sostenuto and maestoso, and the left hand figure is to be slurred instead of staccato. This is not the Vagabond starting out on his journey, this is the Vagabond who has been on his journey: “I have trod the upward and the downward slope; / I have endured and done in days before;” (lines 1 and 2). This is a much changed Vagabond theme and it appears again in measure 3 where, appropriately, the right hand of the piano moves upward as the bass moves downward. (See example 3.28.) The other references are to “Whither must I Wander?” in measures 8-9 (example 3.29) to the text “And I have lived and loved,” and to “Bright is the Ring of Words” in measures 17-21 (example 3.30) after the line “and closed the door.” The references to earlier songs in the cycle serve to remind the listener of pertinent moments in it. In “Whither must I Wander?” the Vagabond comes to the realization that he has fulfilled his desire: he has traveled the open road as he set out to do in the opening song of the cycle. In doing this, he has lived his dream, he also found his love (Beauty), left her, and upon returning to his home, realized that both his home and his life would never be the same. The reference to “Bright is the Ring of Words” is similar. That part of his life is over. This is a pianissimo echo of what was originally an emphatic forte statement. It is a mere memory.
Example 3.28. “I have trod the upward and the downward slope,” m. 1 (reference to “The Vagabond”)

Example 3.29. “I have trod the upward and the downward slope,” mm. 8-9 (reference to “Whither must I Wander?”), piano only.

Example 3.30. “I have trod the upward and the downward slope,” mm. 17-21 (reference to “Bright is the Ring of Words”), piano only.

The last reference is, again, to “The Vagabond,” and it refers to the two measures of bassline accompaniment that are played before the voice enters for the very
first time (see example 3.31); here it is stated two measures before the final chord (and therefore final measure) of the piece.

Example 3.31. “I have trod the upward and the downward slope,” mm. 23-25, piano only (reference to “The Vagabond”)

Now the bassline is slurred with tenuto marks (and with whole-note pedal tones on the fifth). Our Vagabond is an older, slower, sadder man, walking off into the distance: this trampling theme is pianissimo and is to be continually played rallentando. No more the staccato, alla marcia, ma sempre marcato, sempre pesante il basso Vagabond, for those days are behind him.

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_Songs of Travel_ marked an important phase in the composer’s career. It is with this early song cycle that we find the beginnings of some of the hallmarks that become part of Vaughan Williams’s musical language, such as the parallel thirds, the rising arpeggio endings, third relationships (the C to E-flat and C to E in the opening song), the minor tonalities with a hint of modality, and the rhythmic fingerprint that even makes its way into the next chapter and the 1909
song cycle, *On Wenlock Edge*. For many of these aspects of Vaughan Williams’s musical language, the *Songs of Travel* were a way to test out (for lack of a better phrase) these.

Throughout his career Vaughan Williams exhibited a gravitation towards the English countryside, which included gypsies and the gypsy life. He and his friend Gustav Holst spent many walking holidays traipsing (i.e. tramping) over that countryside, enjoying the fresh air and the open road (and the village pub). The English countryside was very much a part of his life, and the English countryside was very much a part of what Vaughan Williams considered to be the real England. His family was from the country, and he was worried that certain things associated with country life would be lost, in particular, the songs. Considering Vaughan Williams’s love for the countryside and his love of Borrow’s novel *Lavengro*, it is not surprising that he chose certain poems from Stevenson’s *Songs of Travel* to set as a narrative that so closely resembled particular aspects of Borrow’s story. Following this narrative allowed Vaughan Williams to explore the wandering life without idealizing it. His and Stevenson’s Vagabond experiences heartbreak and the natural elements, but this is the price of the freedom he so longed for. As Savage so elegantly puts it:

> [B]eyond his interest in Gypsies as perhaps paradoxical preservers of pure English tradition, Vaughan Williams in those years showed signs at least of being as involved as Augustus John, if in a quieter way, with ‘pure-blood’ gypsophilia and its celebration of Romany otherness: the antidote par excellence to the malaise of the modern.\(^{354}\)

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\(^{354}\) Roger Savage, “Vaughan Williams, the Romany Ryes and the Cambridge Ritualists,” 384-5.
The piano plays a significant role in *Songs of Travel*. It is often the piano that is telling the story that is implied by the poet, as is so often the case in the tradition of song (and song cycle) writing. It is also in the accompaniment that Vaughan Williams often places the unifying fingerprint. While it occasionally appears in the vocal part, it really lives in the piano part. In the epilogue, the voice becomes secondary and it is the piano that allows the listener to relive the narrative one last time. Vaughan Williams's reliance on the piano to set the stage for the narrative is somewhat surprising for someone who himself was such a poor keyboardist.355

In her biography of the composer, Ursula Vaughan Williams discusses a performance of *Songs of Travel* that took place at a festival at the Royal College of Music, London, in 1919. The cycle was on a program right before George Butterworth’s *Banks of Green Willow*. She says: “both works belonged to a world which must have seemed immeasurably far away.”356

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355 In her biography of her husband, Ursula Vaughan Williams explains: “Alan Gray fore saw many difficulties for him and he wrote from Cambridge to the Professor teaching organ-playing at the R. C. M. ‘My dear Parratt, I wish you would let me have a line as to your opinion of Vaughan Williams. He is leaving here next term and is uncertain as to his future. I cannot tell him that I think he is justified in going in for an organist’s career which is his pet idea. He seems to me so hopelessly ‘unhandy’. He has got to a certain point and sticks there. I can never trust him to play a simple service for me without some dread as to what he may do. And this he combines with considerable knowledge and taste on organ and music matters generally. He said once that you had been ‘rushing him through’ pieces before he knew them, from which I gathered that you had noticed the same defects in him. I have tried the same but I cannot say with success. In fact he seems to me somewhat hopeless, but I should be very glad if you could give me your opinion, as of course you have had far wider experience than I have in such matters. Yours very truly, Alan Gray.’” (Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 41-42.)

To my knowledge Vaughan Williams never performed the piano part of *Songs of Travel* himself, at least not publically.

CHAPTER 4

ON WENLOCK EDGE

In 1909 (recte 1907) I came to the conclusion that I was lumpy and stodgy; had come to a dead-end and that a little French polish would be of use to me. So I went to Paris armed with an introduction to Maurice Ravel.357

In December of 1907, at the age of thirty-five and already a well-established composer on the English musical scene, Vaughan Williams went to Paris for three months to study composition with Maurice Ravel.358 His original plan had been to follow Edwin Evans’s advice and study with Vincent D’Indy, founder of the Schola Cantorum, acolyte of Franck and Beethoven, and a strict and systematic pedagogue.359 However, Vaughan Williams instead followed the advice of the critic and musicologist Michel-Dmitri Calvocoressi, who arranged a meeting with the “tiny, rouged, Baudelairean dandy of a composer,” Ravel.360 Ravel was a controversial choice for the English composer. He was three years younger, and while he had studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Gabriel Fauré, his career there was undistinguished (he failed repeatedly, for example, to win the


358 Until recently very little had been written about Vaughan Williams’s studies with Ravel. However, Byron Adams has done much to fill this lacuna in the scholarship with his two unpublished papers, “‘A Little French Polish’: Vaughan Williams’s lessons with Ravel” and “Vaughan Williams’ Musical Apprenticeship,” as well as his forthcoming essay in The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams. I must thank Prof. Adams here for sending me copies of his unpublished papers.


Prix de Rome).\textsuperscript{361} Ravel was considered to be on the fringe of the avant-garde,\textsuperscript{362} while Vaughan Williams most decidedly was not on the fringe nor anywhere near the avant-garde. Yet Ravel was just what he was looking for. Vaughan Williams wrote to Calvocoressi after his lessons with the French composer had begun, to express his appreciation:

[December 1907]

Hotel de L’Univers et du Portugal
Rue Croix des Petits Champs

Dear Mr Calvocoressi

I must write you one line to thank you for introducing me to the man who is exactly what I am looking for. As far as I know my own faults he hit on them all exactly & is telling me to do

\textsuperscript{361} Ravel’s work at the Conservatoire was uneven. In 1889 he was studying piano with Emile Decombes but by November of that year he had been granted admission to Eugène Anthiôme’s piano class. After Ravel won first prize in the piano competition in 1891 he progressed to Charles-Wilfrid Bériot’s piano class and Emile Pessard’s Harmony class. When Ravel failed to win any prizes he was dismissed from his classes and left the Conservatoire in 1895. Two years later he returned to the Conservatoire to study composition with Gabriel Fauré, but failing to win any prizes in composition either, he was dismissed from the composition class as well in 1900 although he still studied with Fauré. (See \textit{Grove Music Online}, s.v. “Ravel, Maurice,” by Barbara L. Kelly, accessed March 31, 2014, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.hillsdale.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/52145.) In her article in \textit{Grove Music Online}, Barbara Kelly outlines Ravel’s failures and their unexpected outcome: “These failures pale in comparison with his five attempts between 1900 and 1905 to win the Prix de Rome, in what became known as the first ‘Affaire Ravel’. In 1900 he was eliminated from the competition in the preliminary round after submitting a fugue and a choral work, \textit{Les Bayadères}. The following year his cantata \textit{Myrrha} won third prize, but in 1902 and 1903 his cantatas \textit{Alcyone} and \textit{Alyssa} failed to impress the juries. Finally, having reached the age limit, Ravel competed for the last time in 1905, but was eliminated in the first round, having written a fugue containing parallel 5ths and ending with a chord containing a major 7th. Despite these obvious musical transgressions, public opinion felt that Ravel had been wronged. Even critics normally hostile to him, in particular Pierre Lalo, and observers such as Romain Rolland were shocked that a composer who had established himself at the Société Nationale de Musique with works such as \textit{Jeux d’eau} and the String Quartet had been barred from competing in the final round of this prestigious student award. More disturbing was the revelation that all the finalists were students of Lenepveu, who was on the jury. After the scandal had been taken up by the press, Dubois resigned as director of the Conservatoire and was replaced by the reforming and tolerant Fauré.” (\textit{Grove Music Online}, s.v. “Ravel, Maurice,” by Barbara L. Kelly, accessed March 31, 2014, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.hillsdale.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/52145.)

exactly what I half feel in my mind I ought to do—but it just wanted saying.

I have got Antar and have set to work on him. It is awfully kind of you to have been present at the lesson—it was such a help[.]

Yrs very truly
R. Vaughan Williams.  

Vaughan Williams’s decision to study with Ravel marked a turning point in his career. Ravel taught him to orchestrate in points of colour rather than in the linear fashion he was accustomed to and which was the result of his previous influences.  

From the letter above, we can see that Ravel introduced Vaughan Williams to Rimsky-Korsakov’s Symphony No 2, Antar. Adams suggests that Ravel set Vaughan Williams the task of orchestrating some of the French composer’s own works, specifically “La vallée des cloches” from Miroirs, as well as others of Ravel’s piano works and parts of Borodin.  


365 Byron Adams, “Vaughan Williams’ Musical Apprenticeship,” 23 and 27. Adams also speculates that Vaughan Williams would not have known much (if any) of Ravel’s or Debussy’s music with the exception of Ravel’s Pavane pour une infante defunte (1899) and perhaps his Cinq mélodies populaires grecques for voice and piano (1904-5) prior to his study with Ravel, due to the prejudice against French music that had existed for decades in Britain, and specifically because of the dismissal of French music by his teachers Parry and Stanford (see “Vaughan Williams’ Musical Apprenticeship,” 20). While Parry and Stanford may have been critical of French music, a recent article by Leanne Langley reveals that the previously thought prejudice against French music may have been over-blown. As she explains in her article, which specifically focuses on Berlioz throughout the years 1870 to 1920, after Berlioz made his five successful visits to England and British performing forces improved, performances of Berlioz’s music occurred at regular intervals with increasing frequency not just in London, but throughout Britain. (See Leanne Langley, “Agency and Change: Berlioz in Britain, 1870-1920,” Journal of the Royal Musical Association 132, no. 2 (2007), 206-348.) While Langley’s article focuses on Berlioz, she also mentions the British première of Debussy’s Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune, conducted by Henry Wood in 1904 (p. 341). For other examples of how this long-held prejudice is being revised, see also Leanne Langley, “Joining Up the Dots: Cross-Channel Models in the Shaping of London Orchestral Culture, 1895-1914,” in Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Temperley, ed. Bennett Zon (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 37-58. Also, a quick look at Appendix 3a “Works by non-British composers given first British performances in the Saturday concerts of the Crystal Palace” (in Michael Musgrave, The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace, Cambridge: Cambridge University
In 1909, fresh from his composition studies with Ravel, Vaughan Williams published both a string quartet (in G minor) and a song cycle for tenor, piano and string quartet called *On Wenlock Edge*. *On Wenlock Edge* demonstrates both the new insight gained from his study with Ravel as well as Vaughan Williams’s continuing interest in contemporary English literature and poetry. For this song cycle the composer chose to set six of the sixty-three poems of Alfred Edward Housman’s collection *A Shropshire Lad*, in the following order:

1. “On Wenlock Edge”
2. “From Far, From Eve and Morning”
3. “Is My Team Ploughing”
4. “Oh, When I Was in Love with You”
5. “Bredon Hill”
6. “Clun”

A. E. Housman (1859-1936) grew up in Worcestershire, England, and attended St. John’s College, Oxford on a scholarship to study Classics. He passed his first examination (Classical Moderations) with a First, but he failed Greats two

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Press, 1995) shows several pieces by Saint-Saëns, Massenet, and Berlioz. Additionally, Leanne Langley, in her chapter “Building an Orchestra, Creating an Audience: Robert Newman and the Queen’s Hall Promenade Concerts, 1895-1926,” in the most recent book on the Proms, shows that between the years 1895 and 1914 music by the following French composers were performed several times in England at the Proms: Gounod 487 times, Saint-Saëns 269, Berlioz 220, Bizet 188, and Debussy 39. (See Leanne Langley, “Building an Orchestra, Creating an Audience: Robert Newman and the Queen’s Hall Promenade Concerts, 1895-1926,” in *The Proms: A New History*, ed. Jenny Doctor and David Wright (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 69.) These more recent studies build on Cyril Ehrlich’s groundbreaking work, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). See Ehrlich’s “Appendix 1: The Evolution of the Repertoire,” where he lists pieces (in the categories of tone-poems, rhapsodies, variations, etc.) by both Debussy and Ravel increasing in number from 1902-1942 (see p. 247), and “Appendix 2: Commissions, Dedications, and Probably First Performances” where, during the years in question here (i.e. 1885-ca. 1910) Ehrlich shows performances of pieces by Gounod, Bizet, (the Belgian composer) Peter Benoit, Grétry, and Berlioz (see pp. 248-266).
years later. After returning home and spending a few months teaching at his former school, Bromsgrove, he went to London to take up a Civil Service appointment. He eventually became a clerk in a Patent Office in London where Moses Jackson, his former college roommate and love of his life, already had a job.\(^{366}\)

While Housman was working as a clerk he continued his scholarly research as a Classicist and published several papers on Horace, Propertius, Ovid, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles. Eventually his reputation as a scholar was so great that in 1892 he was offered a professorship of Latin at University College London (which he accepted). In 1911 he moved to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took the Kennedy Professorship of Latin, and where he remained for the rest of his life. As a classicist he is known for his critical editions of Manilius, Juvenal, and Lucan,\(^{367}\) but he is more popularly known for the small volume of sixty-three poems titled *A Shropshire Lad*.

Housman published two collections of poems in his lifetime, *A Shropshire Lad* in 1896 and *Last Poems* in 1922. The other printed collections, *More Poems* and *Additional Poems*, were published posthumously by his brother Lawrence.

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\(^{366}\) This information is well-known and can be found in any of the standard biographies of A. E. Housman, e.g., Laurence Housman, *My Brother, A. E. Housman* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1937); Grant Richards, *Housman 1897-1936* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942); Carol Efrati, *The Road of Danger, Guilt, and Shame: The Lonely Way of A. E. Housman* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2002), etc. However, for a truncated version of Housman’s life, see Chapter One, “A. E. Housman and *A Shropshire Lad*” (pp. 3-16) in Lawrence George Johnson, “A Shropshire Lad in Song:” Three Tenor Song Cycles based on A. E. Housman’s “A Shropshire Lad”: “On Wenlock Edge” by Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The Land of Lost Content” by John Ireland, and “Ludlow and Teme” by Ivor Gurney.”

Initially, Housman had difficulty getting *A Shropshire Lad*\(^{368}\) published. He offered it first to Macmillan, who declined it on the advice of their reader, John Morley.\(^{369}\) It was then accepted by Kegan Paul, who would only publish it at Housman’s expense (500 copies, 1896). A second edition was published in September 1898, with Grant Richards as the publisher (another 500 copies).\(^{370}\) (Grant Richards would remain Housman’s literary publisher for the rest of his life.) It was only with the third and fourth editions (1000 and 2000 copies respectively) that were published by Grant Richards during and immediately after the Boer War in February 1900 and January 1903 that the poems became more well known.\(^{371}\) (For example, E. M. Forster includes a brief mention of *A Shropshire Lad* in his 1908 novel *A Room with a View*. Mr. Beebe and Freddy go to call on the Emersons and find the sitting room blocked with, to Mr. Beebe’s mind, books of rather lamentable taste. He picks up *A Shropshire Lad* and comments “Never heard of it.”\(^{372}\)


\(^{370}\) Grant Richards, *Housman 1897-1936*, 25.

\(^{371}\) Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 233.

While *A Shropshire Lad* eventually became well-received by the reading public, its contemporary critical reception ran the gamut. The earliest reviews were quite positive. For example, Huber Bland, in April 1896 in *The New Age*, remarked “Here at last is a note that has for long been lacking in English poetry—simplicity, to wit.”373 He went on to say:

The little volume before us contains, on well-nigh every page, essentially and distinctively new poetry. The individual voice rings out true and clear. It is not an inspiring voice, perhaps; it speaks not to us of hope in the future, of glory in the post, or of joy in the present. But it says and sings things that have not been sung or said before, and this with a power an directness, and with a heart-penetrating quality for which one may seek in vain through the work of any contemporary lyrist,…. This direct expression of elemental emotions, of heart-thoughts, if we may be permitted the phrase, is the dominant note of all Mr. Housman’s work as it was of Heine’s alone among modern singers.374

Louise Imogen Guiney, an American poet, also wrote an early review of *A Shropshire Lad* in 1897. She described it as a “careless, indignant jewel”375 and went on to exclaim:

Lovely verbal austerity, heroic, quiet, better than dramatic feeling! As old Basse, in his elegy, sweetly invited Spenser and Beaumont, in their Abbey graves, to lie nearer and make room for a greater third, so may our minor bards stand back a little for a young stranger who, in quality, has hardly a rival among them, and touch their rusty lances to the rim of his shining shield.376

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William Archer, like Bland, used the term “simplicity” in 1898 in describing Housman’s poems in a positive sense (though later critics would use the term pejoratively). In this passage Archer sees the simplicity of Housman’s verse as part of its inherent beauty:

Mr. Housman is a vernacular poet, if ever there was one. He employs scarcely a word that is not understood [sic] of the people, and current on their lips. For this very reason, some readers who have come to regard decoration, and even contortion, as of the essence of poetry, may need time to acquire the taste for Mr. Housman’s simplicity. But if he is vernacular, he is also classical in the best sense of the word. His simplicity is not that of weakness, but of strength and skill. He eschews extrinsic and factitious ornament because he knows how to attain beauty without it…Mr. Housman has this talent in a very high degree…He will often say more by a cunning silence than many another poet by pages of speech. That is how he has contrived to get into this tiny volume so much of the very essence and savour of life.377

In later years the collection was quite often accused of being too simplistic, too biographical, or, because it was seen as biographical, too laden with homosexual overtones. For example, Louis Kronenberg wrote in 1937:

One could hardly tie him in with anything very original concerning life itself, or explain at great length a philosophy that was almost self-explanatory, or find special meaning in him that the rest of the world has neglected to find.378

And Edith Sitwell followed this a year later (1938) with the following:

This admired simplicity of his seems not so much the result of passion finding its expression in an inevitable phrase…as the result of a bare and threadbare texture. And the texture is not strong enough to contain an explosive force, or the possibility of a passionate upheaval under the line. When the structure is rigid, it is not the rigidity of grief; it seems to arise from stiffness, from an


insufficient fluidity. The verse is, for the most part, rhythmically dead.\textsuperscript{379}

R. P. Blackmur stated in 1940 that Housman was not even a great \textit{minor} poet (emphasis mine), nor was he a profound thinker. What he was, though, according to Blackmur, was “a desperately solemn purveyor of a single adolescent emotion.”\textsuperscript{380} Indeed, Blackmur went on to say that Housman “had not the equipment for speech nor the maturity of being that ripens the urge to [move] speech into objective form…”\textsuperscript{381}

Even as recently as 1985, Banfield argued that one of the reasons Housman’s verse was so attractive to composers was the presence of “pastoralism mixed with a strong flavour of fatalistic, \textit{fin-de-siècle} gloom, both carrying overtones of repressed homosexuality.”\textsuperscript{382} In all fairness to Banfield, he does go on to say that the second quality of Housman’s verse that made it so attractive to composers was its “universally recognized musical quality,”\textsuperscript{383} although he never really explains what that is or of what it consists. In 1940 Stanley Bayliss had remarked upon Housman’s attraction to composers over forty years earlier and he was somewhat clearer:

First, they contained so many phrases eloquent of the beauties of the English countryside, and fell in with the mood so admirably


\textsuperscript{381} Richard Blackmur, \textit{The Expense of Greatness}, 203.

\textsuperscript{382} Stephen Banfield, \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, 239.

\textsuperscript{383} Stephen Banfield, \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, 239.
anthologised [sic] by E. V. Lucas in ‘The Open Road’ (1899). Stevenson’s ‘Songs of Travel’ and ‘A Shropshire Lad’ have something in common. … The second reason is that these poems had an echo of the questions that became more and more rife after the two Jubilees of Queen Victoria and the shocks of the Boer War. And, thirdly, they were very English.  

Mellers explained English composers’ attraction to Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* as “a bleak awareness of impermanence in a post-Darwinian, incipiently Freudian, godless and faithless world.” There may in fact be many reasons why English composers in the early twentieth century were attracted to Housman’s poetry and subsequently set it to music. *A Shropshire Lad* as a collection runs the entire emotional gamut from despair to joy, and some of the poems are even quite humorous. The poems include subjects such as inter-personal relationships, the experience of war and its aftermath, a love of nature, varying degrees of religious attitudes, and death. Some of the particularly English traits in *A Shropshire Lad* are all of the place-names mentioned that allow the readers to associate with particular places (usually rural) in England; the pairing of England past and present; and Housman’s description of the outdoors and rural activities that fit with the need current at the time to escape the confines of the office in the city or the rules of the Victorian or Edwardian drawing room. This escapism also played into the prevalent nostalgia for rural England that was current during Vaughan Williams’s lifetime.

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386 In addition to “Oh when I was in love with you,” poem XVII, which I discuss in this chapter, see “Terence, this is stupid stuff,” poem LXII, as merely two examples.
It has now been well over a century since the publication of *A Shropshire Lad*, and in addition to several book-length studies on Housman and his poetry, there is a learned society that “exists to promote the knowledge and appreciation of the lives and works of A. E. Housman and other members of his family.”

The Housman Society was founded in 1973 and publishes a journal annually and two newsletters per year. The articles in the journal are wide ranging and deal with such topics as Housman and music (or musical settings of Housman’s verse), Housman’s knowledge of Shropshire, place-name studies, Housman and Cricket, Housman’s connection with Hardy and other poets, and other topics as noted in the footnotes.

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387 [http://www.housman-society.co.uk/](http://www.housman-society.co.uk/)


and war, 393 Housman’s religious beliefs, 394 and the overall popularity of A
Shropshire Lad and the dualities found therein. 395 The articles in the Housman
Society Journal are comprised largely of work from the scholarly community, but
also from poets and authors with long-held interests in Housman. The most
extensive critical study of Housman’s poetry to date is Archie Burnett’s edition of
The Poems of A. E. Housman. 396 While Housman was a noted Classicist, he was
also a poet, and his poetry is studied just as much as his work on Manilius is read.

The six poems that Vaughan Williams chose from Housman’s collection
for his 1909 cycle came from the central thirty-three poems in the collection (out
of sixty-three total). The composer does not present them in the order that they
appear in the cycle, rather he creates his own order. The original order of the
poems in Housman’s collection appear on the left side of Table 4.1 below, and the
order of the songs as they appear in Vaughan Williams’s cycle appears on the
right, along with the number of the poem in parenthesis.

393 Carol Efrati, “Housman, Hardy, and the Boer War Elegy,” Housman Society Journal 25
(November 1999), 73-78.

Housman Society Journal 31 (2005), 41-52.

(1982), 51-52; Andrew Maund, “A Shropshire Lad and the Internet,” Housman Society Journal 27
(November 2001), 54-57; Kate Kennedy, “…And lads are in love with the grave”: The peculiar
appeal of Housman’s A Shropshire Lad,” Housman Society Journal 34 (2008), 31-34; George

396 Archie Burnett, ed., The Poems of A. E. Housman.
Table 4.1: AEH and RVW orderings for *On Wenlock Edge.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem (AEH)</th>
<th>Songs (RVW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of poem or first line, or both, with the number of the poem in parenthesis</td>
<td>Title of song, with the number of the poem in parenthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. “Oh, when I was in love with you” (XVIII)</td>
<td>1. “On Wenlock Edge” (XXXI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. <em>Bredon Hill</em>, “In summertime on Bredon” (XXI)</td>
<td>2. “From far, from eve and morning” (XXXII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. “Is my team ploughing” (XXVII)</td>
<td>3. “Is my team ploughing” (XXVII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. “On Wenlock Edge the wood’s in trouble” (XXXI)</td>
<td>4. “Oh, when I was in love with you” (XVIII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. “From far, from eve and morning” (XXXII)</td>
<td>5. “Bredon Hill” (XXI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. “In valleys of springs of rivers” (L)</td>
<td>6. “Clun” (L)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike the composer’s 1904 song cycle, *Songs of Travel, On Wenlock Edge* does not tell a complete story. Dickinson sees the first, third, and fifth songs as the main pieces of the cycle, and the other three songs as filler, and therefore does not consider it a cohesive, coherent cycle:

One suspects that of these six he picked nos. 1, 3 and then 5 for the main material, linked them with slighter pieces, which I find almost superfluous. Certainly it is nos. 1, 3, and 5 which give the cycle its main shape; no. 1 (“On Wenlock Edge”) sets a new standard of mood-concentration, no. 3 (“Is My Team Ploughing?”) is a tense dialogue, and no. 5 (“Bredon Hill”) is, obliquely, a scene in itself. In some such proportions the six songs congregate, cumulative and wayward, answering stabs of experience but hardly a coherent musical cycle. 397

Hold sees the cycle as much too short to outline any narrative, but he does read the cycle as “the Lad’s [i.e. the main character’s] reflections on life, love and death.” 398 Hold views the relative size of the songs as an unusual feature of the

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398 Trevor Hold, *From Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers*, 113. To be clear, it is not that I think the cycle is too short to have a narrative, it is simply that the narrative is not there. The length of the cycle has nothing to do with it.
cycle: three substantial songs (“On Wenlock Edge,” “Is my team ploughing?,” and “Bredon Hill”) interspersed with two short ones (“From far, from eve and morning” and “Oh, when I was in love with you”). Hold identifies “Clun” as a postlude. I, on the other hand, have a somewhat different view. To me, On Wenlock Edge presents six vignettes, each with the same protagonist, and each in some way dealing with issues of time, usually in the guise of past versus present. Most of the songs touch upon death, and many of them reference English place-names and/or rural activities.

Housman uses no fewer than sixteen distinct references to places, hills and rivers in the English countryside in three of the six poems included in Vaughan Williams’s cycle. (This number does not include those references to specifically rural activities, many of which are also found in the poems, including the three poems that do not mention specific places.) In “On Wenlock Edge” these include Wenlock Edge (line 1), the Wrekin (line 2), the Severn (line 4), and Uricon (lines 6 and 20); “Bredon Hill” includes Bredon (lines 1, 22, and 31), both the shires (line 3), and “coloured counties” (line 8); and in “Clun” one finds the rivers Ony, Teme, and Clun (in line 2, Teme appears again in line 19, and Clun also in the prefatory quatrain and again in line 22), the town of Knighton (lines 7, 8, 20, and 21), the river Thames (lines 9 and 19), and London (line 10). “Clun” begins with the prefatory quatrain “Clunton and Clunbury / Clungunford and Clun, / Are the quietest places/ Under the sun”, and I include the three place names not previously mentioned (Clunton, Clunbury, and Clungunford) in my count of place

399 Trevor Hold, From Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers, 113.
names, although Vaughan Williams does not actually set this section of the text. The map below of 1895 from the Report of the Boundary Commissioners from England and Wales shows most of the places mentioned by Housman in *A Shropshire Lad*. Wenlock Edge is a wooded escarpment in Shropshire that runs fifteen miles from Much Wenlock to Craven Arms;\(^400\) the Wrekin is a hill that dominates this area as well as the River Severn and it marks the ancient city of Uricon, sometimes referred to as Uriconium. In the first century A. D. this was the fourth largest city in Roman Britain. This area is now called Wroxeter.\(^401\)


\(^{401}\) Archie Burnett, ed., *The Poems of A. E. Housman*, 342. During Housman’s lifetime it was quite appropriate for Uricon to be referred to as Uricon or Uriconium. It is now more frequently called Viriconium and was the legendary fortress and fourth largest *civitas* in what is now modern Wroxeter, which lies along the River Severn about five miles south-east of Shrewsbury. It occupied about 170 acres.
Table 4.2: Map of Shropshire, England, 1885. Originally Printed by Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1885.\textsuperscript{402}

\textsuperscript{402} \url{http://www.londonancestor.com/maps/bc-shrop-th.htm}, accessed 5 August 2013. Here I must thank Martin I. Nord, Public Services Librarian at the Michael Alex Mossey Library at Hillsdale College, for his assistance in locating this map and in inserting it here.
A. E. Housman wrote “Bredon Hill” before he wrote the rest of *A Shropshire Lad*, and thus before he knew he would be creating a book of poems about Shropshire. Housman explained this to his long-time correspondent, Houston Martin, in a letter dated 17 October 1934:

…Bredon Hill is in Worcestershire on the edge of Gloucestershire. That poem was written early, before I knew the book would be a Shropshire book. Abdon Burf is the highest part of the Brown Clee, which is the highest hill in Shropshire, but will soon cease to be so, as they are quarrying the top away.

While there is no Bredon Hill in Shropshire, there are Breidden Hills. The phrases “both the shires” and “coloured counties” refer to Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. The prefatory quatrain of “Clun” appears in John Murray’s 1879 *Handbook for Shropshire and Cheshire*, a book Housman had in his personal library. The four places mentioned in the prefatory quatrain to “Clun,” i.e. Clunton, Clunbury, Clungunford and Clun, are small villages in Shropshire.

The River Ony (sometimes Onny) is both the Rivers East Onny and West Onny and they join in Eaton and flow southeast as the River Ony/Onny and join the

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406 Archie Burnett, ed., *The Poems of A. E. Housman*, 335-336. It is explained in Burnett’s commentary that in previous drafts of the poem Housman had chosen the word “painted” instead of “coloured”, but through the course of editing had come to use “coloured” instead. On the Housman Society website there is a picture of the “coloured counties”, and it could be that Housman was referring to the different colored fields. When you view them from a high point (like a hilltop), it appears almost as if you are looking at a patchwork quilt. See, for example, [http://www.housman-society.co.uk/books.htm](http://www.housman-society.co.uk/books.htm).

River Teme at Bromfield, northwest of Ludlow. The River Clun rises in the Black Mountain and flows past the four Shropshire villages mentioned in the prefatory quatrain. It joins the River Teme west of Ludlow in Leintwardine. Ony, Teme and Clun flow around Ludlow, a market town in Shropshire mentioned in other poems in Housman’s collection. Knighton is a market town on the river Teme, fourteen miles west of Ludlow. It is now in Powys, but until 1894 (i.e., during Housman’s lifetime) it was included in Shropshire. (The river Clun also flows around the four villages mentioned in the prefatory quatrain.)

The Thames is the second longest river in the United Kingdom. It rises at Thames Head in Gloucester and flows into the English channel (via London).

The only two cities mentioned by Housman are Uricon and London, and neither are mentioned in a positive light. Uricon does not exist anymore and when it did it housed the Romans, interlopers on British soil. It was and is the place of anger and trouble, both ancient and recent. London, Housman explains, is simply the “town built ill”. The poet’s use of local place names (be they real or imagined, like Bredon Hill) and the suggestion that the venerated countryside or small country village is somehow more acceptable than a larger town or city goes far to establish this particular collection of poems as consistent with perpetuating the idea of the establishment of an English national identity around rural themes,
as well as an association with the “Back to the Land” movement.\textsuperscript{411} It helped to create an affinity or an intimacy with a particular place in England. It allowed one to experience a regional identity. Jan Marsh explains that Housman’s verse “Suggested to all those who found themselves unwilling, rootless inhabitants of suburbia that there was value in attachment to a particular rural place.”\textsuperscript{412}

In his article “Village School or Blackboard Jungle?” Ken Worpole gives a sense of his own upbringing.\textsuperscript{413} Worpole explains that he “was brought up in Leytonstone, East London, and Southend, Essex, both essentially urban environments”, but while at school his pictures of real English life were essentially rural.\textsuperscript{414} He says:

\ldots it seems to me that in England, and in many other countries also, patriotism is green. That is to say, it is quite frequently evoked by appeals to the image of a still and timeless countryside which is thought to compose the quintessential England. The windswept moors and downs, the chalk streams, the wooded dales, the lakes and heaths, the Cotswold villages and small Suffolk hamlets, where the sturdy English yeomanry still abide and where Arthurian knights sleep beneath the hills—this, we have been told so often, is the real England.\textsuperscript{415}

\textsuperscript{411} The Back to the Land movement is defined in Chapter 1, on page 42, n. 123.

\textsuperscript{412} Jan Marsh, \textit{Back to the Land}, 32.

\textsuperscript{413} Ken Worpole is Emeritus Professor in the Cities Institute, London Metropolitan University. He served on the UK government’s Urban Green Spaces Task Force, on the Expert Panel of the Heritage Lottery Fund, and was an advisor to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. His most recent book, co-authored with Jason Orton, is \textit{The New English Landscape} (London: Field Station, 2013). For more information see http://www.worpole.net/.


\textsuperscript{415} Ken Worpole, “Village School or Blackboard Jungle?” 137.
This idea, that the ‘real England’ existed primarily in the country, or, at any rate, not in the larger towns and cities, arose during the second half of the nineteenth century and continued on into the twentieth. It is connected, to a large extent, with England’s responses to industrialization and increasing urbanization and commercialization. By 1912 England’s economy had shifted from being based on agriculture to being based overwhelmingly on industry and commerce, resulting in a steady stream of people moving into the larger urban areas in search of employment.\footnote{Jan Marsh, \textit{Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880-1914}, 1-2.} (The 1911 census of England and Wales shows that the urban population had risen from 8.99 million in 1851 to 28.16 million in 1911.\footnote{Jeremy Black, \textit{A New History of England} (Gloucester: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 220.} This is an increase from 50.2 percent of the population living in urban areas in 1851 to 78.10 percent in 1911.) Quixotically, this growth in urban life and industrialization, combined with the steady decline of rural endeavors, led to a surge of nostalgia for rural life.\footnote{Jan Marsh, \textit{Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880-1914}, 4.} Increasingly, long-term city dwellers were noticing a rise in both poverty and need-based crime. It should be remembered here that both poverty and crime certainly existed prior to this movement. However, around the turn of the century it was becoming more visible in urban centers that were swelling with the recent influx of people migrating to places where they thought they could find work. Thus the vision of the rural abode and country lifestyle became associated with the ideal of goodness and purity, an ideal singularly lacking any presence of abject poverty or crime. Vaughan Williams’s
friend, G. M. Trevelyan, famous historian of the day, explained the burgeoning recognition of the importance of open spaces or green spaces to city dwellers during the latter years of Victoria’s reign. Municipal governments, regardless of party affiliation, began to develop and fund green spaces and areas for what would typically be thought of as more rural pursuits within the city limits.

Trevelyan also discussed the poverty found in the city at length in his landmark

*English History:*

At home the last two decades of the century, and of Queen Victoria’s reign, whether under Liberal or Conservative Ministries, were years of social and administrative progress, particularly in the direction of what was known as ‘municipal socialism.’ Baths and wash-houses, museums, public libraries, parks, gardens, open spaces, allotments, lodging houses for the working classes were acquired, erected or maintained out of the rates. Tramways, gas, electricity and water were in many places municipalized. It was also a great period of voluntary effort, of ‘Settlements’ like Toynbee Hall, and of a very general awakening of all classes to the terrible consequences of ‘environment’ in the slums, in ‘the richest country in the world’—as England was then still accounted. The scientifically guided Christian inspiration of Canon Barnett; the statistical investigations of Charles Booth and his helpers into the real facts of London life and his reasoned advocacy of Old Age Pensions; the social side of ‘General’ William Booth’s work of redemption through the Salvation Army, the Church work on similar lines; the civic patriotism of the new London, and its activities initiated by John Burns of Battersea and the Progressive party of the London County Council in its early years; the investigations and ‘Fabian’ tactics of the Sidney Webbs, to manoeuvre installments of socialism out of Liberal and Conservative governments and parties; the more militant life breathed into Socialism by Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty* and by Hyndman’s Social Democratic Federation’ the extension of Trade Union activity from the highly skilled to the ill-paid and unskilled trades signalized by the Dockers strike of 1889,--all these

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419 I think it important to note that the general trend that I am discussing here, i.e., migrating from the country to the city, the increased crime in the city, the abject poverty found in the city, and the need for green open space within the city was something that was recognized at the time while it was going on, not merely after the fact. Hence the Trevelyan reference.
and many other movements and forces indicated that the social problem was not at its end but at its beginning and might well in the coming century devour the other aspects of political life.\textsuperscript{420}

From the mid-nineteenth century through the twentieth Britain experienced a loss of power.\textsuperscript{421} Even though she had been the leader in the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, Germany and the United States were fast becoming economic and industrial rivals, soon to surpass the productivity of the English.\textsuperscript{422} Therefore, with the loss of her status as the unchallenged leading world power and the imminent loss in the race for industrial prowess, England needed to embrace a new cultural identity, one that was not associated with the Empire or the Industrial Revolution. Hence, the upsurge of the idealist visions of a rural utopia that permeated English society at the time. As historian Stephen Haseler put it, “English liberty and English conquest gave way for the English countryside.”\textsuperscript{423} It was this idealist vision that helped to make A

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{420}George Macaulay Trevelyan, \textit{English History} (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), 690-691.
\item \textsuperscript{421}I am specifically referring here to the gradual loss of imperial and industrial power. For example, self-government was first discussed for Canada as early as 1839, then put into effect in 1847. Soon thereafter self-government went into effect in Australia, New Zealand, and Natal in South Africa. In 1907 they were all granted status as dominions. In 1947 India was granted Independence, in 1948 Sri Lanka and Burma, 1957 Ghana followed suit, and in 1997 Hong Kong was returned to Chinese rule. For a very brief overview of this see \textit{Encyclopædia Britannica Online}, s. v. "British Empire," accessed August 05, 2013, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/80013/British-Empire.
\item \textsuperscript{422}E.g., see Simon Schama, \textit{A History of Britain: The Fate of Empire 1776-2000} (New York: Hyperion, 2002), especially Chapter Seven “The Last of Bladesover?” (390-453) and Chapter Eight “Endurance” (pp. 454-459). See also Jeremy Black, \textit{A New History of England} (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 194.
\end{enumerate}
Shropshire Lad so well-known and important in England at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Back to the Land, Jan Marsh explains:

It was the sense of belonging to a place or region which made A. E Housman’s verse so popular, in its nostalgic evocation of lost lands and vanished friends. Housman’s Shropshire, for all its use of actual place-names, is a location of feeling rather than landscape; [his poetry] suggested to all those who found themselves unwilling, rootless inhabitants of suburbia that there was value in attachment to a particular rural place.424

This collection came to represent England and the spirit of what it meant to be English so much in the minds of its readers that six poems from A Shropshire Lad were published during the First World War as issue 98 of The Times Broadsheets for the Trenches (sometimes referred to as The Times Broadsheets for the Soldiers and Sailors). According to an advertisement at the time:

The object of these issues is to provide extracts from good English literature of all kinds in a new and portable form, suited to life on the high seas or trenches.425

These broadsheets were issued by The Times during the war for people to buy for the soldiers on active duty. Either an individual would purchase a single sheet and mail it to a specific soldier, or people would provide the financial support for a large group of them to be dropped on the soldiers via airplane. The idea behind the latter possibility was that if the broadsheets landed near the British soldiers the specifically English literature contained therein would provide intellectual support for their endeavors. On the other hand, if the broadsheets happened to land near the enemy, the verses and prose contained in the pages would be so vigorously


425 The Times, Tuesday, 14 September 1915, 11.
English that (it was felt) they would instill fear and trepidation in the hearts of the enemy and hopefully cause them to give up the fight. The inclusion of “On Wenlock Edge” in this particular publication by the editors (or guest editors) of The Times firmly and irrevocably established it as part of the collection of English literature that makes up a portion of England’s nationalist rhetoric. The literature included in The Times Broadsheets was purposefully and specifically English.

That is to say, it included what the editors of the Times considered to be the best of English literature that represented the nation.⁴²⁶ (Of course, Vaughan Williams had set the texts from Housman’s collection prior to “On Wenlock Edge’s” inclusion in The Times Broadsheets; so I believe that Vaughan Williams’s settings merely aided in their establishment with the larger portion of the nationalist rhetoric.)

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Several authors deal with Vaughan Williams’s song cycle On Wenlock Edge. It has been the subject of several Masters theses and DMA dissertations.

The earliest are two Masters theses that are analyses of the song cycle: John Douglas Pummill’s 1965 “Analysis of the Song Cycle On Wenlock Edge by Ralph

⁴²⁶ An example of Series No. 1 of The Times Broadsheets for the Trenches/The Times Broadsheets for Soldiers and Sailors exists online in Current History and Forum, Volume 3 (Google ebook) (C-H Publishing Corportation, 1916), 753. (This is not the series that Housman’s poem appeared in, although he was included with the likes of Wordsworth, Milton, and Shakespeare.) http://books.google.com/books?id=a104AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA753&lpg=PA753&dq=the%20times%20broadsheets%20for%20the%20trenches&source=bl&ots=XpHI3M7fhL&sig=E8--gAbwkS-SLFyJcv08tf6WAwk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=mRJAU-HNE_PQsATIm4Eg&ved=0CFUQ6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=the%20times%20broadsheets%20for%20%20trenches%20for%20solders%20and%20sailors%20and%20sailors&f=false
Vaughan Williams”


This material was followed in 1974 by Howard Jeffery Whitmore’s thesis “On Wenlock Edge by Ralph Vaughan Williams.”

Franklyn Lynn Lusk’s 1975 DMA dissertation presents a more thorough analysis of music and text relations within the cycle. In his 1980 Masters thesis, Gary R. Reece focuses on information that he thinks will assist the soloist in interpretation and performance of On Wenlock Edge, and while he examines all six of the songs, he focuses more specifically on the first three songs of the cycle. Edwin Sand Calloway analyzes the three Housman-based song cycles by Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, and Arthur Somervell, but pays particular attention to the settings of “Bredon Hill” and the poem’s purpose within each composer’s cycle.

Another DMA dissertation by Lawrence

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George Johnson analyses the music and text of three Housman cycles by Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, and Ivor Gurney.\textsuperscript{433}

Because of the cycle’s place in Vaughan Williams’s oeuvre as one of the pieces he wrote directly after studying with Ravel, \textit{On Wenlock Edge} has also received prominent space in several books: Hubert Foss, Percy M. Young, Frank Howes, A. E. F. Dickinson, Michael Kennedy and James Day all discuss it at length in their biographies of the composer.\textsuperscript{434} To a significant degree, all of Vaughan Williams’s biographers claim that this cycle came (or must have come) as somewhat of a shock in the first decade of the twentieth century, and each of them associate the vocal melodies with folk song in some way. Hubert Foss proclaimed, “There is no record of what Parry thought of the song-cycle: but it certainly has ten “impertinences” for every one in the earlier Symphony.”\textsuperscript{435} Foss goes on to list some of the “impertinences: a third degree of a “common chord” that is “roughly elbowed out of the way by the tonic of two superimposed fourths”; and an A major scale at the end of “Clun” that includes a D sharp.\textsuperscript{436} Young, however, sees \textit{On Wenlock Edge} as a masterpiece.\textsuperscript{437} Howes briefly

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{433} Lawrence George Johnson, “A Shropshire Lad in Song: Three Tenor Song Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s “A Shropshire Lad”; “On Wenlock Edge”, “The Land of Lost content” by John Ireland, and “Ludlow and Teme” by Ivor Gurney.”


\textsuperscript{435} Hubert Foss, \textit{Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Study}, 102.

\textsuperscript{436} Hubert Foss, \textit{Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Study}, 102. Foss does not indicate any textual reasons for these two “impertinences”.

\textsuperscript{437} Percy M. Young, \textit{Vaughan Williams}, 38.
\end{flushleft}
explains that the cycle has a connection to the English countryside, the river, the wind, and the belfry, but he sees the cycle largely as unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{438} Michael Kennedy and James Day provide the most careful consideration of the cycle, including more detailed discussion of each song and (briefly) the reception history of the cycle. Stephen Banfield recognizes that Housman’s poetry elicited an original style from the composer,\textsuperscript{439} while Trevor Hold acknowledges Vaughan Williams’s ability to cope with a wide range of subject matter while simultaneously questioning the appeal of what Hold sees as an ironic and cynical poet to a stoic and optimistic composer.\textsuperscript{440} Laura Tunbridge likewise discusses \textit{On Wenlock Edge} to a significant degree, both because of its place in Vaughan Williams’s \textit{oeuvre}, but also, especially in Tunbridge’s case, for its links with pastoralism.\textsuperscript{441} I draw on all of these scholars, but take their work further. Vaughan Williams has chosen a poet that displays both the beauties of the countryside and the realities of life as well: storms, troubles, lost love, and death. How these are displayed in Vaughan Williams’s music and how they present this different, changing view of Englishness is what I am concerned with in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{438} Frank Howes, \textit{The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams}, 215.

\textsuperscript{439} Stephen Banfield, \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, 245.

\textsuperscript{440} Trevor Hold, \textit{Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers}, 115.

\textsuperscript{441} Stephen Banfield, \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, 234-245; Trevor Hold, \textit{Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers}, 112-115; and Laura Tunbridge, \textit{The Song Cycle}, 131-134.
The Songs

I. “On Wenlock Edge” (poem XXXI)

On Wenlock Edge, the wood’s in trouble;
    His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
    And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

‘Twould blow like this through holt and hanger
    When Uricon the city stood:
‘Tis the old wind in the old anger,
    But then it threshed another wood.

Then, ‘twas before my time, the Roman
    At yonder heaving hill would stare:
The blood that warms an English yeoman,
    The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,
    Through him the gale of life blew high;
The tree of man was never quiet:
    Then ‘twas the Roman, now ‘tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,
    It blows so hard, ‘twill soon be gone:
To-day the Roman and his trouble
    Are ashes under Uricon.

“Oh Wenlock Edge” is the thirty-first poem of Housman’s collection, but

Vaughan Williams chose this to be the first and eponymous song of the cycle. In
the first quatrain we discover that a fierce gale is plying Wenlock Edge. The
winds are so strong that the forest on the Wrekin, the 1335 foot hill that dominates
the surrounding landscape of Much Wenlock, the River Severn and Southeast of
Shrewsbury,\(^{442}\) appears to be heaving. The narrator, an English yeoman,
acknowledges that a similar gale would have blown exactly like this in the distant
past when England was occupied by the Romans: “‘Twould blow like this

\(^{442}\) See Archie Burnett, *The Poems of A. E. Housman*, 342.
through holt and hanger / When Uricon the city stood” (lines 5 and 6). There is also a simile of that gale that “plies the saplings double” and “‘Twould blow like this through holt and hanger” and the troubled thoughts that are the “gale of life.”

Like the gale of wind that plagued the Roman of the past and the English yeoman of the present, the troubles of life plagued both the Roman and the yeoman “the Roman / At yonder heaving hill would stare: / the blood that warms an English yeoman, / The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.” (lines 9-12). The yeoman acknowledges a connection with the Roman and himself in line sixteen, “Then ‘twas the Roman, now ‘tis I”, but then goes on to realize that the Roman and his troubles are long gone: “To-day the Roman and his trouble / Are ashes under Uricon.” (lines 19 and 20). There is also the underlying implication that the yeoman will one day be gone as well.

Vaughan Williams set this five-quatrain song in the form AA′BB′C to correspond with the construction of present versus past versus sense of future presented in the narrative. Thus, in the first two quatrains the English yeoman is speaking from the present, in the second two quatrains he is referring to the past.

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443 Michael Kennedy discusses this briefly. See Michael Kennedy, The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 117.

444 I mean here, of course, the “present” of the poem. English yeoman have existed throughout history, and there is no internal evidence in the poem outside of the first quatrain: “the wood’s in trouble”, i.e. the wood is in trouble, implying the present. The yeoman mentioned here would most likely be the definition labeled II.3.a. “A man holding a small landed estate; a freeholder under the rank of a gentleman; hence vaguely a commoner or countryman of respectable standing, esp. one who cultivates his own land.” (“yeoman, n.”. OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. http://o-ww.eom.com.library.hillsdale.edu/view/Entry/231598?redirectedFrom=yeoman (accessed August 08, 2013). This reading of “English yeoman” makes sense within the context of the rest of Housman’s A Shropshire Lad. Burnett’s commentary seems to suggest this as well. He quotes from Robert Wells in the Times Literary Supplement, 9-15 September 1988, 1001, “Just as the Roman, or Romanized Briton, of Uricon has his counterpart in “The English Yeoman” of Housman’s time, so the Roman place-name is hidden beneath the English one.” See Archie Burnett, ed., The Poems of A. E. Housman, 342.
when the Romans would have been in Britain; then, in the last quatrain, he comes to the realization that the Roman is gone, the gale will soon be gone, and he, too, will soon be gone. To help reflect the dichotomy of past versus present, Vaughan Williams also used bitonality, G against A-flat in the piano (and in the cello), as the gale blows in the present as it did in the past.\textsuperscript{445} (See example 4.1.) In fact, the song is, for the most part, in G minor, which Mellers claims represents the storm described in the text.\textsuperscript{446}

Example 4.1. “On Wenlock Edge”, mm. 11-12, piano only

\textsuperscript{445} Lawrence George Johnson also notices the dichotomy of the past versus present and its reflection in the accompaniment. See Lawrence George Johnson, “A Shropshire Lad in Song: Three Tenor Song Cycles based on A. E. Housman’s “A Shropshire Lad”; “On Wenlock Edge” by Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The Land of Lost Content” by John Ireland, and “Ludlow and Teme” by Ivor Gurney,” 64.

\textsuperscript{446} Wilfrid Mellers, Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion, 367. In his discussion of musical symbolism that appears as an appendix in his book, Mellers mentions the cycle On Wenlock Edge specifically, but only three songs from the cycle: this first song, “On Wenlock Edge,” the second song, “From Far, From Eve and Morning,” and “Clun,” the last song.
Niall Rudd, in his discussion of “On Wenlock Edge,” refers to the contrasts in the poem as “the tension between difference and sameness” and “the tension between transience and permanence” (referring, of course, to those qualities present in the place as well as the figures of the Roman and the yeoman). He also explains that while the Roman and yeoman are different, the most important point in the poem is the assertion of their shared humanity.

Vaughan Williams sets the stage for the song by portraying the sweeping wind of the gale in the introduction: *agitato* tremolos in the strings, arpeggiated triads (within a pentatonic realm) in the piano. (See example 4.2.)

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449 Several authors read the introduction of this song as a portrayal of the gale or the wind. See, for example, A. E. F. Dickinson, *Vaughan Williams*, 155; Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers*, 113, and Lawrence George Johnson, “A Shropshire Lad in Song: Three Tenor Song Cycles based on A. E. Housman’s “A Shropshire Lad”; “On Wenlock Edge” by Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The Land of Lost Content” by John Ireland, and “Ludlow and Teme” by Ivor Gurney,” 63, to name a few.
Example 4.2. “On Wenlock Edge”, mm. 1-6.
Example 4.2 (continued)
The introduction is repeated before the second verse with only one difference: the second time it appears, the phrase in the first measure is truncated to three beats instead of four—there is no quarter note between the triplet figures. In these first two verses the composer continues to trill at least one string part at all times (if the strings are not playing tremolo) in order to continue depicting the presence of the gale, while the piano keeps its arpeggio figure, punctuated occasionally by triplet chords, perhaps indicating even stronger gusts of wind. For the vocal melody Vaughan Williams employs a pentatonicism (mm. 6-10 and 21-25) for “On Wenlock Edge, the wood’s in trouble; / His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;”
(lines 1-2) and “’Twould blow like this through hold and hanger / When Uricon the city stood:” (lines 5-6), a recitative-like vocal line (mm. 11-12 and 26-28) for “The gale, it plies the saplings double,” (line 3) and “’Tis the old wind in the old anger,” (line 7), and chromaticism (mm. 13-16 and 28-31) for “And thick on Severn Snow the leaves” (line 4) and “But then it threshed another wood” (line 8).  

(See examples 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5.)

Example 4.3. “On Wenlock Edge,” mm. 6-10 (vocal line)

Example 4.4. “On Wenlock Edge,” mm. 11-12 (vocal line)

Example 4.5. “On Wenlock Edge,” mm. 13-16 (vocal line)

In setting both the first and second quatrains, Vaughan Williams uses pentatonicism to make a statement or relay information. He uses the recitative-like vocal line to create a sense of urgency in relation to the idea of the wind, and the chromatic line to emphasize the trouble it has brought: in the first quatrain, the

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450 Lawrence George Johnson mentions pentatonicism, recitative, and chromaticism very generally but is not specific as to measure numbers or why it is employed except to say that they appear during the present, past and the storm dissipation, respectively, which is not entirely accurate. See Lawrence George Johnson, “A Shropshire Lad in Song: Three Tenor Song Cycles based on A. E. Housman’s “A Shropshire Lad”: “On Wenlock Edge” by Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The land of Lost Content” by John Ireland, and “Ludlow and Teme” by Ivor Gurney,” 64.
wind is so strong that the leaves are falling like snow on the River Severn, and, in the case of the second quatrain, we are meant to think of an old gale and old angers of a history long since past.

The musical interludes before the third and fourth quatrains signal a change in the text. All four string instruments are trilling, the piano has two sixty-fourth note arpeggios, and the dynamics move increasingly towards pianissimo. (See example 4.6.)

Example 4.6. “On Wenlock Edge,” mm. 31-33
For the next two quatrains, the narrator speaks of the past, when the Romans occupied Britain, when Uricon was still a city. Vaughan Williams once again uses both recitative techniques and chromaticism to portray the text. In these two verses, the recitative-like vocal line, accompanied in the beginning only by softly trilling piano notes in the bass, is used almost like a story-telling feature: “Then, ‘twas before my time, the Roman / At yonder heaving hill would stare:” (lines 9 and 10), and “There, like the wind through woods in riot, / Through him the gale of life blew high;” (lines 13 and 14). Both relay information and create a sense of urgency. (See example 4.7.)
Example 4.7. “On Wenlock Edge,” mm. 34-38, vocal line.

Vaughan Williams also uses word painting at the chromatic and dynamic rise and fall at “heaving” in the above example (4.7) to create a sense of anxiety. In the fourth quatrain the comparable word is gale (which also works with the word painting). In the example above, the vocal line ends on an upward leap of a fifth, but in the fourth quatrain, the text at this point is “blew high”, and Vaughan Williams takes this opportunity to indulge in heightened word painting: an upward leap of an octave.

Once again, chromaticism is used, now to portray “trouble”: “The blood that warms an English yeoman, / The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.” (lines 11 and 12, mm. 39-42) and “The tree of man was never quiet: / The ‘twas the Roman, now ‘tis I.” (lines 15-16, mm. 50-55). These sections of descending chromatic lines for the singer are backed by a loud and stormy accompaniment, in contrast to the sparsely scored recitative-like passages that preceded them.

The last line of the fourth quatrain, “Then ‘twas the Roman, now ‘tis I” (line 16), is perhaps the most poignant line in the entire poem. They both would have experienced gale-force winds, and the gales of life. But in the last quatrain, the yeoman acknowledges mortality and looks to the future. He realizes that the
gale will soon be over and the Roman is long gone. Similar to the previous shift in narrative, this verse, too, is signaled by the musical interlude preceding it. The piano represents the sweeping wind of the gale with arpeggiated triads (like the opening measures of the song—see measure 2 of example 4.2) while the upper strings play tremolo on sustained notes. The combination of these two musical “events” is new and it serves here to signal the final verse. There are several musical and textual things that set this last quatrain apart. First, Housman begins this quatrain with a repetition of line three, “The gale, it plies the saplings double,” (line 17). This is the first time in the poem that he has repeated a line, although Vaughan Williams does not use the opportunity to repeat music. Instead, he sets the entirety of the last quatrain in a quasi-recitative style. The strings begin tremolo and sul ponticello, only changing to naturale at measure 62 (“’twill soon be gone,” line 18), at which point the voice drops a fifth (cadentially) to coincide with “be gone”. Vaughan Williams does this deliberately—it mirrors the bass line in the piano, which (at pianissimo) plays the opening vocal melody of the song. (Incidentally, both the voice and the bass part of the piano move in a V-I cadential pattern, which can be understood poetically as a kind of ending.) At this point, measure 62, when all the parts are marked tranquillo, the hint of the opening melody serves as a reminder of the past, a memory. The entire last verse moves from piano to pianissimo to ppp, until finally the piano ends at pppp. The continual dying away of sound represents the end of the gale, the death of the
Roman and his troubles (who are now “ashes under Uricon”), and the eventual and inevitable death of the English yeoman.451

II. “From Far, From Eve and Morning” (poem XXXII)

From far, from eve and morning
And yon twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I.

Now—for a breath I tarry
Nor yet disperse apart—
Take my hand quick and tell me,
What have you in your heart.

Speak now, and I will answer;
How shall I help you, say;
Ere to the wind’s twelve quarters
I take my endless way.

“From far, from eve and morning” is one of the most mysterious of Housman’s poems in Vaughan Williams’s cycle. The subject of the poem has been created by the wind, which has blown in from all directions to knit the subject together. Now, he is waiting, lingering, for a breath, before he once again

451 For a more modern example of the text and musical setting of this poem being used to illuminate, illustrate, or further describe an instance of trouble, we can turn to the late English mystery author Jill McGown and her novel A Perfect Match (1983). In Chapter Six, the two primary investigators are driving to the police station in the middle of a murder investigation after a night of gales and storms. During the drive Detective Inspector Lloyd quotes and sings passages from “On Wenlock Edge” in the midst of a discussion about the murderer who, as far as they know, is living in the woods, and had hidden amidst the gales the previous night. The passage is as follows: “‘The gale, it plies the saplings double, and thick on Severn snow the leaves’.” Lloyd said, winding up the window as the soul-improving freshness proved too much…‘It goes on, you know.’ She frowned. ‘What does?’ “‘On Wenlock Edge”—you should listen to it.” (Jill McGown, A Perfect Match (London: Pan Books, 1991; London: Macmillan, 1983), 101. This passage is interesting not just because it is a (relatively) recent reference to Housman’s poetry, but because the reference seems to equate the musical setting with the poetry itself. While McGown does not refer specifically to Vaughan Williams’s setting, it is highly likely that this is the setting she is thinking of, since it is undoubtedly the most well-known. Also, here you have two “good” characters investigating and chasing a supposed murderer (i.e. trouble), and a moment of barometric calm after an evening of gales and storms (i.e. “the woods in riot”; these could be read as such both because of the storm and because they are housing an alleged murderer).
disperses in the wind. While he is still “alive” he wants to know what is in the heart of the implied addressee of the poem so that he can help.

“From far, from eve and morning” is a poem that references many other works. In Archie Burnett’s commentary to this poem, he notes that the poem relates to the union of matter (concilium) and its dissolution (discidium) as found in Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, i.183, 484 ii. 110, 120, iii. 596.\(^{452}\) The “twelve-winded sky” (line 2) refers to the twelve quarters from which the wind can come.\(^ {453} \) There is also the Tower of the Winds in Athens, which Housman, as a Classicist, would have known about and which might be being invoked here as well.\(^ {454} \) “Nor yet disperse apart” (line 6) is also a reference to Lucretius De Rerum Natura, specifically iii.539, 544: “dilaniata foras disparagitur” (“it [the spirit] is torn to pieces and dispersed abroad’), “pereat dispersa per auras” (“it perishes dispersed abroad through the air”), and iii. 455-6 “ergo dissolui quoque convenit omnem animai / naturam, ceu fumus, in altas aeris auras” (“It follows therefore that the whole nature of the spirit is dissolved abroad like smoke into the high winds of the air”), “in auras / aeris...post mortem eiecta (“cast forth into the winds of the air after death”).\(^ {455} \) Line nine, “Speak now, and I will answer” has three possible biblical references: Job 13:22 “Then call thou, and I will


\(^{454}\) The Tower of Winds is an octagonal marble structure built by Andronicus of Cyrrhus in 100-50 B. C. for measuring time. It is about 42 feet high by 12 feet wide. There is, of course, a difference in the number of sides, but the idea is similar.

answer;” Psalm 91:15 “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.” and Proverbs 1:28 “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me.” References to other works are many and varied throughout Housman’s poems. Percy Withers, in A Buried Life: Personal Recollections of A. E. Housman, explains that Housman’s conversation was continually littered with references to poetry, prose, and history:

Interest, and more than interest—excitement—was kept at stretch, and the range widened, by constantly recurring references and quotations, literary and historical, poetry and prose. He was the only man I have known to quote prose, and him I have heard do it again and again, not avouching verbal accuracy, but always with the extenuation ‘something like this’—then reel off a lengthy sentence by, perhaps Selden, perhaps Macaulay, or it might be some lesser known author.

Archie Burnett, in the introduction to his critical edition of Housman’s poems, discusses the intertextual references in them and Housman’s amazingly retentive memory. It is difficult to say whether or not Housman’s intertextuality in “From far, from eve and morning” had any specific effect on Vaughan Williams’s setting, yet the references appear in the section of the poem that Vaughan Williams sets apart via a change in the accompaniment. The composer was

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460 Archie Burnett, ed., The Poems of A. E. Housman, see esp. pages lvii-lx.
educated at Charterhouse and took a second-class degree in history at Trinity College, Cambridge, so it is likely that he would have recognized some of the references. A Cambridge education assumed knowledge of Latin, and Vaughan Williams most likely would have read many of the works Housman was referencing in the original language. (Vaughan Williams almost certainly would have recognized many of the other literary references as well. It was a habit of the Wedgewood/Vaughan Williams/Darwin family to read aloud after tea in the winter—usually Shakespeare or Scott while Vaughan Williams was still a child—and Vaughan Williams remained a voracious reader throughout his life.⁴⁶¹

This poem contains three quatrains, and the form of the song is ABA¹, but the form does not necessarily follow the quatrains. Mellers associates the key of this piece, E major, traditionally with heaven, but “precariously so,” which will be seen from the discussion below.⁴⁶² The first A section (mm. 1-11) corresponds to the first quatrain of the poem and is accompanied by piano alone, but the B section (mm. 12-21) of the song sets both the second quatrain and the first two lines of the third quatrain. Vaughan Williams is following the narrative of the text here rather than its form. In the first quatrain Housman introduces a character, seemingly created by or brought by the wind. In the last two lines of the poem the wind takes this character away again. Vaughan Williams scores these sections (A and A¹) for voice and piano alone, and opens with a series of chords, beginning with E major, using large, open spacing. (See example 4.8.)

⁴⁶¹ Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 20. (This page is a specific reference to Shakespeare and Scott, but the biography mentions several books and poems that the composer turns to throughout his life in every chapter.)

Example 4.8. “From far, from eve and morning, mm.3-4.

These chords are striking, simple, beautiful, and at times wonderfully non-functional (E major—G major—F major in first inversion—G major—E major for the introduction). The use of such chords suggests that Vaughan Williams may be evoking the mystery of the poem. Kennedy claimed that “From far, from eve and morning” was:

...perhaps the most beautiful Vaughan Williams wrote. The wide consecutive common chords on the pianoforte forcibly emphasize that one of Vaughan Williams’s achievements from early in his life was his wonderfully imaginative reconstruction of uses of the common chord.\textsuperscript{463}

Hold explains:

‘From far, from eve and morning’ is one of his finest achievements. After the elaborate accompaniment of the opening song, he turns to utmost simplicity: wide-spreading piano chords underpin a vocal line that never strays far from its home note (B natural).\textsuperscript{464}

When the mysterious, nameless subject of the poem appears, Vaughan Williams announces his arrival with a C-sharp major chord (the V of F-sharp minor) at the

\textsuperscript{463} Michael Kennedy, \textit{The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams}. 118.

\textsuperscript{464} Trevor Hold. \textit{Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers}, 113.
phrase “here am I” (line 4, m. 10). (The other purpose of this chord is to transition into the B section of the song, the second quatrain.)

In the second quatrain and for the first half of the third (lines 5-10), the character that has appeared from the wind is now “alive,” lingering for a breath, and wanting to know what is “in your heart.” (This is also, as mentioned, the section where the intertextual references occur.) Vaughan Williams alters the accompaniment and changes the nature of the song. In the previous section, he directed the (solo) piano to play misterioso and for the pianist to use the una corda pedal. The singer, likewise, was to be solenne. In addition, the vocal line, which was previously centered around the note B, the dominant of the tonal focus of the A section, has now (at measure 12) switched to being centered around C sharp, the dominant of F sharp. In measure 12, with the start of the B section (and the second quatrain of the poem), the composer brings in the strings, directs all of them and the singer to perform Più mosso (freely) and colla voce. The piano does not play at all during the B section (mm. 12-21). (See example 4.9.)
In their dissertations, both Calloway and Johnson agree about the tonal shifts in the B section of this song, although only Calloway states outright that the B section is in F-sharp minor.\textsuperscript{465} (The use of the E natural suggests the use of the natural minor or a modal inflection in this section.) However, neither scholar mentions the possible \textit{textual} reasons for the key change or the change from piano to strings in this section. This passage also presents the first instance in this song cycle where we first encounter the rhythmic fingerprint that permeated \textit{Songs of Travel}.\textsuperscript{466} Here Vaughan Williams uses it (whether consciously or unconsciously)

\textsuperscript{465} Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s \textit{A Shropshire Lad} by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell”, 60 and Lawrence George Johnson, “\textit{A Shropshire Lad} in Song: Three Tenor Song Cycles based on A. E. Housman’s “ \textit{A Shropshire Lad}”: “On Wenlock Edge” by Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The Land of Lost Content” by John Ireland, and “Ludlow and Teme” by Ivor Gurney,” 65.

\textsuperscript{466} Duple followed by triple. See chapter three for a more extensive discussion.
for the question “tell me, / What have you in your heart?” (lines 9-10 and mm. 16-17, see example 4.10) and it occurs in the voice and all the strings.

Example 4.10. “From far, from eve and morning,” mm. 16-17.

The second time the composer uses the fingerprint is for the next query in the poem, “How shall I help you” (line 10, m. 20), where again, it occurs in the voice and all the strings. The open-ended quality of the first question is inherent in its musical accompaniment, which is seventh chords devoid of their thirds over a held B in the cello. The second question is more practical in nature, “How shall I help you?” It is accompanied by triads. The fingerprint underlies the purpose of the subject of the poem (that has been knit together from the wind), that is, to answer the eternal questions. After the fermata, at measure 22, the opening chords return, as does the vocal focus on the note B, and we never learn if the questions are answered.
The Classical reference in this poem provides a literary link with “On Wenlock Edge” and its references to Roman Britain. One of the markers of Englishness or English national identity in music is a connection to England’s past or English history. Usually the “past” or the “history” being referred to is either the Tudor or the Jacobean period. In the case of “On Wenlock Edge” and “From far, from eve and morning,” the past being referred to is much earlier. The Classical reference in the two poems reminds the reader, and subsequently the listener, of the ancient history of England and the deep roots of its past.

III. “Is My Team Ploughing” (poem XXVII)

‘Is my team ploughing,
    That I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle
    When I was man alive?’

Ay, the horses trample,
    The harness jingles now;
No change though you lie under
    The land you used to plough.

[‘Is football playing
    Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
    Now I stand up no more?’

Ay, the ball is flying,
    The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
    Stands up to keep the goal.]

‘Is my girl happy,
    That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping

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467 Chapter One, pp. 45-46
As she lies down at eve?’

Ay, she lies down lightly,
    She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
    Be still, my lad, and sleep.

‘Is my friend hearty,
    Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
    A better bed than mine?’

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
    I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man’s sweetheart,
    Never ask me whose.\(^{468}\)

    “Is my team ploughing?” is the song that caused a great rift between the composer and the poet. After the initial blunder, the rift between Housman and Vaughan Williams was subsequently responsible for Housman’s refusal to allow any of his texts to be printed in concert or recital programs during his lifetime. The story is as follows. Having composed the cycle, Vaughan Williams wanted to print the poems in the program for a performance. After Housman granted permission (which was for that time only), the poet sent the following letter to his publisher, Grant Richards, on 11 November 1909:

    As to Mr. Vaughan Williams, about whom your secretary wrote: he came to see me, and made representations and entreaties, so I said he might print the verses he wanted on his programmes. I mention this lest his action should come to your ears and cause you to set the police after him.\(^{469}\)

\(^{468}\) The two quatrains encased in brackets were not set by Vaughan Williams. I discuss this below.

There is no further mention of the composer in any of Housman’s extant correspondence until 20 June 1917, when he wrote to his publisher:

Vaughan Williams did have an interview with me six years or more ago, and induced me by appeals ad misericordiam to let him print words on the programme of a concert for which he had already made arrangements; but the permission applied to that concert only. I knew what the results would be, and told him so.\footnote{Henry Maas, ed., \textit{The Letters of A. E. Housman}, 152 and Archie Burnett, ed., \textit{The Letters of A. E. Housman}, Volume 1, 380.}

Housman found out that Vaughan Williams had omitted two quatrains of the poem from his setting, and the war of words continued with a subsequent letter from Housman to Grant Richards on 20 December 1920 which reads:

This reminds me, I am told that composers in some cases have mutilated my poems,—that Vaughan Williams cut two verses out of “is my team ploughing” (I wonder how he would like me to cut two bars out of his music), and that a lady whose name I forget has set one verse of “The new mistress”, omitting the others. So I am afraid I must ask you, when giving consent to composers, to exact the condition that these pranks are not to be played.\footnote{Henry Maas, ed., \textit{The Letters of A. E. Housman}, 180 and Archie Burnett, ed., \textit{The Letters of A. E. Housman}, Volume 1, 458. The lady in question was Christabel Marillier. Her song, “A Farewell,” repeats the last line of the first stanza. (See Stephen Banfield, \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, 235.)}

Apparently Hubert Foss at Oxford University Press asked Vaughan Williams if Grant Richards could mention their squabble in a biography Richards was writing about Housman.\footnote{Hugh Cobbe, editor of Vaughan Williams’s letters, thinks there is a problem with the date of this letter since Richards’s biography of Housman was not published until 1941. However, I am leaving the date of the letter as it stands in Cobbe’s edition. See Hugh Cobbe, ed., \textit{Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895-1958}, 257, n. 1.} In a letter dated 25 March 1938, the composer answered Foss’s query with typical aplomb:

You may print anything you like. If the biographer [i.e., Grant Richards, Housman’s biographer] comments I think I ought to be
allowed my say which is that the composer has a perfect right artistically to set any portion of a poem he chooses provided he does not actually alter the sense: that makers of anthologies headed by the late Poet Laureate [i.e., Robert Bridges] have done the same thing. I also feel that a poet should be grateful to anyone who fails to perpetuate such lines as:—
‘The goal stands up, the Keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.’

(The composer also took the liberty of repeating the words “Yes lad” in the last verse, but Housman did not mention this in his letters.)

The poem “Is my team ploughing?” is a conversation between the living lad and a (dead) ghost. Jim Page, in his article “‘Mutilated by Music’: A Look at Housman and the Composers,” interprets the ghost as the lad’s conscience.

In discussing Vaughan Williams’s setting of the text, I choose to read the first and subsequent alternate quatrains as the voice of a ghost, that is, as a spirit of another individual talking to the living lad, since this is how I believe Vaughan Williams read the text. As is evident by Page’s article, there are other possibilities and opinions about the two ‘voices’ in the poem. In his article Page does not explain why Vaughan Williams’s setting represents the lad’s conscience as opposed to a ghost. In an earlier (2001) reading, Andrew Maund interprets the same quatrains as I do, as a ghost, or, as he puts it, a “voice from beyond the grave.”


474 From here on I will deal only with the text that Vaughan Williams set.


Both textually and musically the existence of two separate characters is made clear. The ghost (for lack of a better term) always begins his quatrains with a query, and he always starts them with the same word, “is”: “Is my team ploughing?, ” “Is my girl happy?, ” “Is my friend hearty?” This consistent rhetorical device serves to clue the reader/listener in to who is speaking, but it also allows us to understand what is most important to this character: the land, his girl, and his friend. The lad’s responses to the first two queries are similarly consistent: “Ay, the horses trample,” and “Ay, she lies down lightly.” It is only with the last quatrain (of both the lad and the poem itself) that there is any alteration. Instead of beginning the quatrain with the word “Ay,” Housman uses the stranger affirmative “Yes,” and everything changes. Prior to this we have learned, via the lad’s responses, that the horses are still ploughing the fields and his girl is not only not weeping, she is quite happy (i.e., she “lies down lightly,” and she is “well-contented”). Now we know for certain that the lad has essentially taken the place of the ghost. He is driving the horses that used to belong to the dead man, he is living the hearty life that the dead man used to live, and he is sleeping with the girl who used to be the dead man’s sweetheart.

The form of this song follows that of the poem (and consequently that of the two ‘voices’): ABABA'B' plus an instrumental epilogue. Vaughan Williams splits the accompanying instruments in order to represent the two characters. The

477 There are, of course, several ways to interpret this phrase. She could be light of heart, that is to say, no longer sad. Andrew Maund reads this both as “easy in her mind but also a word that contains a sense of her physical weight.” Later on in the same paragraph, Maund goes on to say that Housman may be making a play on the ambiguity of the verb “to lie,” and he explains, “…the mendacity of the physical act of sexual infidelity has been captured in that word since before Shakespeare. The contrast of his friend and girl lying in cheering company rather than the cold obstruction in which the questioner lies alone is also part of the image…” (See Andrew Maund, “A Shropshire Lad and the Internet,” 56.)
four-measure introduction, in which the Dorian mode on D is established as the
tonal center, is performed solely by the muted upper instruments of the string
quartet *Andante sostenuto ma non troppo lento*. The strings continue without the
piano when the voice enters at measure five. In fact, Vaughan Williams sets the
first two of the ghost’s quatrains with only string accompaniment, both times with
the direction ‘*quasi da lontano*’ (as if from afar). This is undoubtedly because it
is far easier to achieve what Vaughan Williams termed ‘atmospheric effects’ with
strings than it is on the piano. The ghost’s queries are answered, both textually
and musically, by a different voice—a live one. Musically Vaughan Williams
represents this living voice by altering the density and texture of the
accompaniment, instrumentation, and by incorporating pitches that fall outside the
realm of D Dorian (most interestingly, by a descending chromatic bass line
underpinning throbbing triplet quarter-note chords, through nearly all the verses
given to the living lad).

The accompaniment for the words of the living lad lies with the piano and
cello until the last quatrain. Unlike the static D minor chord of the ghost’s
accompaniment, the accompaniment for the living lad involves more “life”: more
rhythmically, more harmonically, more dynamically, and there are simply more
notes. Greater movement on all levels is used to set apart the living lad from the
ghost. (See Example 4.11.)
Example 4.11. “Is my team ploughing?”, mm. 11-12.

Vaughan Williams even instructs the performers not only to play at the tempo “animando” and “Poco animando” in the two-measure transitions (measures 9-10 and 27-28 respectively), but at the tempo “Poco animato” once the quatrain begins in earnest (measure 11 for the first entrance of the lad and measure 23 for the second entrance of the ghost). The performers are further instructed to play agitato in measures eleven and twenty-seven. In contrast, the vocal line of the living lad is full of longer notes playing against the continual triplet figures of the piano in the first two verses. The vocal line of the ghost, on the other hand, consists primarily of eighth- and sixteenth-notes — yet another way for the listener to tell the characters apart.

When the ghost is “speaking,” the accompaniment is sparse and even harmonically static, sustaining and occasionally restating a D minor chord (see Example 4.12, mm. 5-8). Something similar happens in mm. 22 through 25 and mm. 39 through 43 (Example 4.13), although in this last example the accompaniment is slightly varied and the harmony, shifting onto a F minor chord.
in m. 41, is now articulated by a tremolo in the strings, and the addition of the piano adds to the intensity produced by the voice which at this point (penultimate quatrain) is asking "'Is my friend hearty, / Now I am thin and pine, / And has he found to sleep in / A better bed than mine?''"

The register of the ghost’s voice has risen as well in this (penultimate) quatrain. We might read this as Vaughan Williams’s response to the ghost’s direct reference to the living lad. There are other possibilities as well. In the living lad’s previous quatrain we find out the ghost’s girl is no longer weeping for him, as she is “well contented,” thus signaling the rise in vocal register, which perhaps symbolizes the ghost’s agitation at the knowledge of his girl moving on. It is also the first time in the text that this “ghost” character has provided a visual description of himself (“Now I am thin and pine”), thus confronting the reality of death. Prior to this, the character’s references to his own death have been numerous, but somewhat oblique: “That I was used to drive,” “When I was man alive?,” “That I thought hard to leave,” “now I stand up no more?” Now, however, the reality of death has set in, and either the agitation or the act of acceptance is the cause of the rise in vocal register. The inclusion of the piano with the ghost’s accompaniment (previously only associated with the living lad), coupled with the rise in vocal register gives the sense of the ghost rising from the grave. This change indicates several things. The ghost suspects that his friend is sleeping with his girl (and this is confirmed both textually and musically in the next quatrain), and this suspicion also comes after the realization that the land, his girl and his friend have all moved on without him, seemingly without any
problem. The agitation or distress of the situation (and the realization people have continued to live their lives without him) is represented by the musical elements mentioned above, coupled with continual tempo changes indicated by the composer. There is no instrumental transition between the ghost and the lad here—measure 42 is the ghost, measure 43 is the lad. In the way Vaughan Williams sets this passage, there is almost an impertinence in the response, indicated also by the text change (i.e. the “yes” versus the “ay” of the previous quatrains). We know for sure that it is the ghost’s girl (“dead man’s sweetheart”) whom the lad is sleeping with in Vaughan Williams’s reading of the text, for these are the words he draws out rhythmically in measures 50-51 in the voice and strings while the piano maintains triplets. The moment is made all the more poignant by the descending chromatic line, previously found in the bass of the piano, now sung at the pertinent moment. (See example 4.14.)
Example 4.12. “Is my team ploughing?” mm. 5-8.
And has he found to sleep in a better bed than

Ped.
Example 4.14 “Is my team ploughing?” mm. 50-51.

In sum, the composer’s musical differentiation of the two characters is multi-faceted. Primarily, it makes it easy for the listener to identify which character is “speaking.” It also represents the idea that death is absolute, indicated by the static D minor chord hovering underneath the voice of the ghost. The living, on the other hand, can alter and change and move at will (e.g., their location, their emotions, their partners, etc.), indicated by the far more animated accompaniment and harmonic motion that occurs in the music for the lad.

Housman once explained in a letter to Houston Martin (28 March 1933) that “Is my team ploughing?” was Thomas Hardy’s favorite among Housman’s poems:

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I could not say that I have a favorite among my poems. Thomas Hardy’s was no. XXVII in *A Shropshire Lad*, and I think it may be the best, though it is not the most perfect.\(^{478}\)

IV. “Oh, when I was in Love with You” (poem XVIII)

Oh, when I was in love with you,
    Then I was clean and brave,
And miles around the wonder grew
    How well did I behave.

And now the fancy passes by,
    And nothing will remain,
And miles around they’ll say that I
    Am quite myself again.

Johnson describes this piece as “a strophic folk song,”\(^ {479}\) and Hold claims that it “acts as a much needed respite between the intense emotions of songs 3 and 5.”\(^ {480}\) This song is in D modal minor\(^ {481}\) and is in the form AB to correspond to the two quatrains. Once again, a song plays with issues of time: past (section A, the first quatrain) and present (section B, the second quatrain). “Oh, *when* I was in love with you, / *Then* I was clean and brave,” (emphasis mine) indicates that the Lad was in love with her in the past. The remainder of the quatrain, “And miles around the wonder grew / How well did I behave” tells us that while he was in love his character was much altered: he was clean, brave, and he behaved well.

Johnson likely described this piece as a folk song because the melody is largely

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\(^{480}\) Trevor Hold, *From Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers*, 114.

set syllabically with eighth notes, employs anacrusis, and the piece is harmonically simple. This first quatrain, for example, is set almost entirely with triads and a chord progression that follows a pattern for each two lines of text, a descending then ascending chord progression for the first two lines: d, C, Bb, C, d; and a descending chord progression for the third and fourth line: d, C Bb, a.  

(See example 4.15 for first line of text.)


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482 Edwin S. Calloway has also noticed the descending chordal pattern, and, later, the descending chordal pattern with ninth chords. While he attaches it to the lines of text, he does not note the change of time (past to present), nor does he note the significance of the change of personality. See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s A Shropshire Lad by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell,” 64-65.
The strings play *pizzicato* while the piano continues to arpeggiate the chords throughout this section.

In the second quatrain (the present) the fancy of love has passed on and the Lad is himself once again, presumably unclean, not terribly brave, but all in all behaving like himself. The accompaniment reflects the Lad’s altered state: the piano is holding quarter-note dyads in the left hand and the arpeggiated notes in the right are slurred. Meanwhile the strings are playing *arco* quarter notes. The underlying chords have also changed, although the descending stepwise pattern remains (a descending whole tone scale): D⁹, C⁹, Bb⁹, Ab⁹ (mm. 11-12). This progression differs from that of the first two largely by its use of ninth chords.⁴⁸³ This all changes during the phrase “nothing will remain” (m. 13), which is set with descending sets of major thirds in the two violins and a pattern of descending sixteenth-note alternating major thirds in the piano right hand. (See example 4.16, mm. 11-13.) These major thirds, coupled with the juxtaposition of the B natural in the piano left hand and the B flat in the piano right hand and in the voice and violin, help reinforce the idea that “nothing will remain.”⁴⁸⁴ The descending line serves to suggest the idea of something falling away and the minor second chromaticism provides a jarring effect. Both features also serve to reinforce the character’s descent into uncleanliness, cowardliness, and behaving

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⁴⁸³ Calloway mentions the use of ninth chords to set the first line of the second verse. See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell,” 65.

⁴⁸⁴ Calloway explains that the composer “draws special attention to the second line of verse 2, “And nothing will remain,” by setting it to the most dissonant accompaniment yet found in the cycle (m. 13).” See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell,” 65.
like himself again—which we see with a return to *pizzicato* chords in the strings and major, arpeggiated triads in the piano right hand. (The *pizzicato* strings perhaps represent the sense of “what goes around comes around” or “lessons in love are rarely learned”—i.e., our Lad is the same.) All of this is happening as the “fancy passes by” with a descending whole-tone progression, also to be seen in Example 4.16.

**Example 4.16. “Oh, When I Was in Love with You”, mm 11-13.**

The B section begins (m. 10) and ends (mm. 22-24) with an arpeggiated D major chord. Perhaps the single measure at the beginning of the B section is meant to give the listener the hint that the state of not being in love is the Lad’s natural
state of being (he is himself, once again), and the drawn-out, three measure D major chord is meant to reinforce that idea.

As Mellers has pointed out, there is not a word in this poem that is more than two syllables. This, combined with the length (24 measures), the relative simplicity of the setting (mostly syllabic), make this song a perfect balance (and respite) between the intensity of the dialogue of “Is my team ploughing?” and “Bredon Hill,” the longest song of the cycle.

V. “Bredon Hill” (poem XXI)

Bredon Hill

In Summertime on Bredon


486 “Bredon Hill” is special poem, both within the context of Vaughan Williams’s cycle, and within the context of Housman’s poetic oeuvre. This is the only poem in the cycle with five-line stanzas. The fifth line, in each stanza, becomes important. For example, in the first quatrains the fifth line distinguishes summer as a happy time. By the third quatrains, the fifth line tells us that even though the good people of the surrounding counties are going to church, the Lad and his love are going to stay were they are. In the subsequent verses, it is the fifth line that delivers the bad news. As early at 1958, Norman Marlow commented on Housman’s use of the five-line stanza in A. E. Housman, Scholar and Poet:

One metrical innovation would in itself be enough to show Housman’s keen perception of rhythm and cadence, and that is the five-line stanza. There are stanzas of five lines in Elizabethan poetry, but nowhere is there any parallel to the effect gained by simply adding a fifth line to rhyme with the second and fourth, still less any occasion where the enhancement of the poetic effect is so great. It seems as though the whole of his poetry is full of echoes of this cadence in the fifth line, and it is a shock to find that there are only four poems in A Shropshire Lad and Last Poems written in this stanza. It is used to obtain the quiet falling close, to convey the deadly intention which Housman so often reserves for the end of the poem. (See Norman Marlow, A. E. Housman, Scholar and Poet (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 158.)

Marlow is correct in that the fifth line is often used “to convey the deadly intention.” However, there are actually six poems written with five-line stanzas between A Shropshire Lad and Last Poems: “When Smoke Stood up from Ludlow” (ASL VII), “The Lent Lily” (ASL XXIX), “The Culprit” (LP I), “Yonder see the morning blink” (LP 11) “The Rain, it streams on stone and hillock” (LP XVIII), “Oh stay at home, my Lad, and Plough” (LP 38), “When summer’s end is nighing” (LP XXXIX)
The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them
In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning
My love and I would lie,
And see the coloured counties,
And hear the larks so high
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her
In valleys miles away:
‘Come all to church, good people;
Good people, come and pray.’
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer
Among the springing thyme,
‘Oh, peal upon our wedding,
And we will hear the chime,
And come to church in time.’

But when the snows at Christmas
On Bredon top were strown,
My love rose up so early
And stole out unbeknown
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,
Groom there was none to see,
The mourners followed after,
And so to church went she,
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,
And still the steeples hum.
‘Come all to church, good people.’ —
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
I hear you, I will come.

“Bredon Hill” moves from summertime to Christmas, so there is a
passage through time (the change of seasons), and the association with time
provides a connection with the songs that come before “Bredon Hill” in the cycle,
all of them have some kind of association with the passage of time (i.e., past versus present, life versus death, arriving and leaving, and now, reminiscence of the past). This song has a tonal center of A, and the form of the song is [intro] A A' B C D A" [postlude]. The form corresponds to the quintets of the poem (with the exception of B, which includes both the third and fourth quintet of the poem) and each section is separated by an instrumental interlude.

In the summer the lovers would lie in on a Sunday morning, looking at the “coloured counties” and listening to the larks. The church bells call to the girl, but she stays with her lover and the lad cheekily answers the bells, “‘Oh, peal upon our wedding, / And we will hear the chime, / And come to church in time’” (lines 18 to 20).

487 Michael Kennedy lists the key of this song as “a kind of G major.” (See Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 43.) It is possible that Kennedy was focusing primarily on the key signatures and the vocal line, which would certainly lead to the conclusion of a tonal center on G. However, once one also considers the strings and piano, there is another option. Edwin Calloway agrees with the assessment of a tonal center of A—he concludes that this song is “modal, centering around A.” (See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Songs Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s A Shropshire Lad by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell,” 66.


489 In his commentary for this poem, Burnett quotes from Lawrence Housman’s Memoir, 102-3: “‘I asked him [AEH] once whether, as a rule, his so happily-chosen adjectives had come to him spontaneously or after labour and with difficulty; and I gave as an instance "coloured counties "…Now, that you should have picked that out”, he said, “is interesting. When I wrote the poem I put down, just to fill up for the time, a quite ordinary adjective, which didn’t satisfy me; others followed. Then with the poem in my head, I went to bed and dreamed, and in my dream I hit on the word ‘painted’; when I woke up I saw that ‘painted’ wouldn’t do, but it gave me ‘coloured’ as the right word.” This is confirmed in the first [actually second] draft of the poem...where the alternatives run: sunny, pleasant, checkered, patterned; “painted” is left out, it was not necessary for that to be written down—it had suggested the right word.’.” (See Archie Burnett, ed., The Poems of A. E. Housman, 336, see also pages Ivii-lx.)
Things change in the fifth verse at Christmas, when snow is on the ground and it turns out that the girl has gone “to church alone.” There is only one bell chiming, and mourners are following her, because she has died. Bell imagery is prominent and provides a focal point throughout this poem: bells sounding clear, around the shires, far and near. Dickinson explains:

In ‘Bredon Hill’ Vaughan Williams moved from the charged dialogue of song 3 into a vivid reminiscence of the past. He has developed this renowned church-bell poem into an almost virtuoso display of bell-like figures, in turn sonorous, tuneful, persistent, dissonant, monotonous, tuneful in the wrong key, sonorous again, and significantly vocal.\footnote{A. E. F. Dickinson, \textit{Vaughan Williams}, 159.}

Hold agrees and contends that:

‘Bredon Hill’ is the most substantial, pictorial and ambitious song in the cycle. In the accompaniment, the composer uses a compendium of bell effects: the hazy bells of a summer morning, alternating unrelated 7\textsuperscript{th} chords played \textit{pianissimo} between strings and piano (verses 1 and 2); more animated bell-sounds for piano alone (verses 3 and 4); and frenetic, almost deafening bell-rings in the final verse.\footnote{Trevor Hold, \textit{From Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers}, 114.}

Vaughan Williams, seemingly obsessed with the movement of time in the poems he has chosen for this cycle, makes use of the bell imagery in “Bredon Hill” in marking the passage of time and being the harbinger of tragedy. The opening of this song, with the tempo demarcation \textit{Moderato tranquillo} suggests laziness. Overlapping, tied whole notes in the strings and whole note, minor seventh chords in both the strings and the piano make for a tonally and rhythmically amorphous beginning, emphasizing the laziness of summer and a feeling of stasis as well as the ambiguity of the opening quintets of the text. The text describes steeple bells
coming from far and near, and the entire twenty-four measure introduction is a musical representation of these bells (see example 4.17, measures 1-24).

While Ravel paid Vaughan Williams the compliment that the English composer was the only one of his pupils who “n’écrit pas de ma musique,”492 (i.e., “does not write my music”), Vaughan Williams may have spent time orchestrating some of Ravel’s piano pieces as part of his study with Ravel. There definitely are similarities between certain pieces. For example, the parallel fourths in measures 16-17 and 20-23 of example 4.17 are similar to those in measure 3 of Ravel’s “La Vallée des Cloches” from Miroirs (1905)493 (see example 4.18).


Example 4.17 (continued)
Example 4.18: Maurice Ravel, “La Vallée des Cloches” from *Miroirs* (1905), mm. 1-3.

Vaughan Williams enhances the lazy summer feeling by directing the tenor to sing freely over sustained eleventh chords (example 4.19).
Example 4.19. “Bredon Hill, mm. 24-28.”
Example 4.19 (continued)

The composer also uses text painting later on in this verse, “they *ring* them / In steeples far and near, / A *happy* noise to hear” (lines 3 to 5, my emphasis). “Ring” and “happy” are made to stand out musically as eighth notes surrounded by slower-moving notes (as, incidentally, are their two comparable words in the second verse, “*coloured*” and the second syllable of “*about*” (lines 8 and 10), which are not necessary examples of text painting). (See example 4.20, mm. 29-33.)
Example 4.20. “Bredon Hill, mm. 29-33.”
The tranquil elements that emphasized the lazy summer in the first two verses are still somewhat present in verses three and four. The bells are ringing to call people to church, but they are miles away, and the couple decides to stay where they are. They are lounging in the thyme, and the male blithely states that they will hear the bells on their wedding day and will be sure to be on time for church then. (“Oh, peal upon our wedding, / And we will hear the chime, / And come to church in time.”: lines 18-20) The piano accompaniment still contains patches of sustained minor seventh chords, and the parallel fourths reappear in measures 90-93, but there are several changes in the musical setting that forecast
the impending doom that we will encounter in the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses. The strings drop out and the voice is accompanied by piano alone, which depicts the pealing of the bells (see measure 52): “The bells would ring to call her / in valleys miles away” (lines 11-12). The tempo has changed from the *Moderato tranquillo* of the first two verses to, initially, a *Poco animato* at measure 52. However, the tempo continually shifts during these two verses (*a rallentando* at measure 63, *Molto tranquillo* at measure 64, *a tempo* at 66, *accelerando* at 91, and finally, *a ritardando* in the second half of measure 93 before reaching the *Più lento* that begins the fifth verse at measure 94). The constantly changing tempi reflects the juxtaposition of the insistent church bells and the lazy summer day the couple are enjoying. While nothing untoward has happened yet, Vaughan Williams was perhaps recognizing musically a sense of discomfort in the couple’s refusal to attend church. Despite Vaughan Williams’s personal spiritual beliefs (he was an atheist, then later in life drifted into a “cheerful agnosticism”⁴⁹⁴), the composer understood the importance of the institution in society. In his article “Scripture, Church, and Culture: Biblical Texts in the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams,” Adams states that the composer had “come to value the Church of England as not merely an institution of the English State, but as integral part of the ‘whole life’ of his national community.”⁴⁹⁵ In addition, because of the composer’s job at St. Barnabas’s church in London and his lack of enthusiasm for organized religion (which was obvious to the Vicar), he was aware of the pitfalls


of not going to Church or acting outside the norm, and the norm at the time this poem was written would have been for the couple to go to church.\textsuperscript{596}

An additional element to consider in this section of the song is that the rhythmic fingerprint discussed in connection with \textit{Songs of Travel} reappears in “Bredon Hill.” In \textit{Songs of Travel} the absence of the rhythmic fingerprint in the song “In Dreams” indicates desolation and a loss of hope and its presence indicates joy, or a sense of contentment. Here the fingerprint has the same role: its presence indicates a sense of contentment and joy. Vaughan Williams uses it in the vocal line when the couple decides to remain laying on the hillside, among the thyme, even though the bells are calling them to church (see example 4.21), and even though missing church is not the “done thing.” This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that in the following verses we find out that the young woman has died, and the fingerprint does not appear again. (The triplet figure in the right hand of the piano of example 4.21 is also possibly recalling the triplets from the opening song of the cycle, “On Wenlock Edge” (compare with example 4.2, specifically mm. 2-3 which, like the example in “Bredon Hill,” is an example of triplets of parallel fourths). In the first song the triplet figure was part of the “gale of life.” Perhaps recalling the “gale” here, and combining it with the call of the pealing bells, further adds to the sense of discomfort, the sense that something is not quite right.)


The fingerprint has appeared in one other song in this cycle: “From far, from eve and morning,” where its use was to indicate a query.

Verse five of the poem and section C of the song (mm. 100-109) is the crux of the unfolding story. In the poem, summer has now turned to winter (“snows at Christmas”), and the bleakness of the season and the death that ensues is represented by the eight-measure instrumental interlude that Vaughan Williams inserts ahead of this verse (mm. 94-101). It is a truncated, paired-down, *Più lento* version of the song’s introduction. The sparse accompaniment continues through the first two lines of verse five (“But when the snows at Christmas / On

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497 Calloway also associates the change of season with the instrumental interlude that appears prior to verse 5 / section C of the song. See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Songs Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell,” 71.
Bredon top were strown”), and the suggestion of desolation is enhanced by the voice’s recitative-like vocal line. The sense of winter stillness, bleak and desolate, is broken only in measure 106 when the strings match the vocal line (which rises with the text “My love rose up”). Rising and going to church alone is used here symbolically to represent death (which is stated for certain in the next verse).

Vaughan Williams provides a hint of this in the accompaniment when he uses a brief octatonic motive to set “My love rose up so early” (mm. 96-97). The composer set both the vocal line (B♭ C D♭ C b⁰) and the underlying triads (b⁰ c D♭ c b⁰) to this octatonic motive in order to emphasize the death of the female character.

Vaughan Williams tolls the “one bell only” before we hear about it in the text in the sixth verse (mm. 110-124). However, this one bell comes in the midst of the memory of the other bells that have rung throughout the song. Seventh chords, bare octaves, and parallel octaves with perfect fourths—all elements that were used to represent bells—are rampant throughout this section, which is now Largamente and has a changed key signature for (and a tonal pull for a modal) G minor. However, this section is marked pianissimo, and what stands out in both the piano and the upper strings is the accented, mezzo forte to ffz octave Gs, which represents the lone bell tolling for the dead woman.

For the last verse Vaughan Williams reverts back to the original key signature, which is the key signature for G major, although the last verse, like the

opening, has a tonal center of A (despite the key signature), and there remains a sense of discomfort. The woman has died, yet the bells still sound on Bredon, the steeples still hum, and the voice outlines a melody in G major, sustained by strings on G and D, while the piano outlines an A minor seventh arpeggiated triad (which becomes an eleventh when the vocal line is put above it). (See Example 4.22.).

Example 4.22. “Bredon Hill,” mm. 128-131

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499 See page 262.
I contend that Vaughan Williams uses this splash of bitonality to indicate the continuation of life in the face of death.

Whether it was caused by Vaughan Williams’s lack of appreciation for organized religion, or merely his particular reading of this poem, the setting of the last two lines of text (mm. 127-142) sounds like an angry, distraught shout: the bells (as represented by the piano and strings) clamoring at fortissimo, and the voice, also at fortissimo in a high tessitura, seemingly shouting for the bells to be quiet. The clamor of the bells begins at the Più mosso at measure 133, but continues in earnest at the Più lento at bar 137. As the lad sings the last two
lines of the poem, “Oh noisy bells be dumb, I hear you, I will come,” he has learned his lesson. He will go to church. Musically we have returned to the introduction, but gone is the lazy summer. After the sorrow and the clamoring of the bells, this feels like resignation.

Banfield discusses Vaughan Williams’s setting of “Bredon Hill” in terms of the growth of British musical awareness prior to the Great War and the rediscovery of English folksong. The melody, Banfield suggests, is influenced in style by the composer’s collection and study of English folksong. (He is referring to the composer’s direction for the melody “to be sung freely.”)

However, I think Vaughan Williams goes further in this setting than in many of his other songs, assisted in large part by the text he chose to set. In this song one encounters references to the church, that important English institution (in both the text and via the peal of bells throughout the score), specific place association, rural idealization and a love of the outdoors, identifiable characters, and death—all of which serve to connect this poem and song to other poems/songs in the cycle and to a general sense of Englishness.

VI. “Clun”

Clunston and Clunbury,
Clungunford and Clun,
Are the quietest places
Under the sun.

In valleys of springs of rivers,
By Ony and Teme and Clun,
The country for easy livers,

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500 Stephen Banfield, “Housman and the Composers,” 15.
The quietest under the sun,

We still had sorrows to lighten,
    One could not be always glad,
And lads knew trouble at Knighton
    When I was a Knighton lad.

By bridges that Thames runs under,
    In London, the town built ill,
‘Tis sure small matter for wonder
    If sorrow is with one still.

And if as a lad grows older
    The troubles he bears are more,
He carries his griefs on a shoulder
    That handselled them long before.

Where shall one halt to deliver
    This luggage I’d lief set down?
Not Thames, not Teme is the river,
    Nor London nor Knighton the town:

‘Tis a long way further than Knighton,
    A quieter place than Clun,
Where doomsday may thunder and lighten
    And little ‘twill matter to one.

Like the other poems in this cycle, “Clun” deals with the passage of time.

In this case, the older lad is contemplating his days as a youth in the market town of Knighton. Housman has written a practical and somewhat prophetic poem here, and explains that even the young have problems: “The lads knew trouble at Knighton / When I was a Knighton lad.” (lines 7 and 8). The Lad’s problems only increase as he gets older, but he has had practice carrying them. (London even seems insignificant compared with the sorrows and troubles the lad carries as an adult.) He cannot lay those troubles down anywhere he knows as a living man. Resolution will have to happen somewhere further away than Knighton, and quieter than Clun. He will, it seems, only rid himself of his troubles when he dies.
Some scholars paint “Clun” as a rather insignificant ending to On Wenlock Edge, even if they happen to like the piece. Dickinson wrote unflatteringly of the song, but seemed confused at the end of the statement about whether he was discussing the poem or the song:

After these heart searchings [of “Bredon Hill”], the extension of ‘Clun’ from a strophical start in a wayward mood to an after-song that assumes the nature of a broad, fading epilogue offers no problems…The…vocal phrase here is on the trite side, but the basic movement of the piano…is a noticeable token of a receding horizon along which Roman, ploughman and other forgotten lovers and sufferers appear to converge in a processional march in a confident, aspiring, un-Housmanesque mood. There is little else to make ‘Clun’ more than the last number of a rich cycle of vignettes. It seems scarcely in place. The opening of doors that Housman merely names here seems intrusive.502

Banfield, in his explanation of the cycle, does not discuss “Clun.” Hold sees it as an epilogue to the cycle, one that is quiet and consoling after the emotionally taxing “Bredon Hill.”503 Despite Dickinson’s misgivings, Banfield’s ignoring, and Hold’s relegation of the piece to a quiet consolation, “Clun,” I believe, is quite important to the cycle as a whole. Textually it serves as an epilogue to On Wenlock Edge in the same way that “I have trod the upward and the downward slope” serves as an epilogue to Songs of Travel. In the poem Housman mentions four small Shropshire villages (Clunton, Clunbury, Clungunford, and Clun), Knighton, and London (the “town built ill”), and the rivers Ony, Teme, and Clun. The places mentioned in this poem have kept the reader/listener primarily within the realm of Shropshire and provide the dichotomy between country and city,

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502 A. E. F. Dickinson, Vaughan Williams, 161.

503 Trevor Hold, From Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers, 115.
rural and urban. The rural/urban distinction was similarly present in “On Wenlock Edge,” while the remainder of the poems in the cycle are distinctly rural. The past/present time distinction has been constant throughout the cycle, and now the narrator is in the present, speaking of things past (like the narrator of “On Wenlock Edge,” thus bookending the cycle).

The form of “Clun,” ABABCD follows the quatrains of the poem, each section used for setting another verse of the poem. The key or tonal center of “Clun,” however, has been the subject of some debate. Kennedy simply lists the song as being in A minor. However, both Calloway and Lusk see the song as having a series of shifting tonal centers throughout the song. (They are all correct, but are all looking for different things. Kennedy is stating the overall key of the piece, whereas Lusk is connecting the analysis with the text. For example, measures 13-16 have an A-flat tonal center which corresponds to “The quietest under the sun, / We still had sorrows to lighten” (lines 4-5). Lusk suggests that the key of A-flat is associated with peaceful living and sunshine. However, he also suggests that measures 17-20 have no tonal center to correspond with the unsteady part of the life of the Knighton Lad.” Calloway notices the moments

504 Calloway also reads the form of the song in this manner. See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s A Shropshire Lad by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell,” 75.

505 Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 43.


where the tonal center shifts, but does not connect it to the text in the same way that Lusk does.\textsuperscript{508)

In addition to textual material, “Clun” also shares musical features with three of the previous songs in the cycle. The expansive piano seventh chords (here alternating F-sharp half-diminished seventh and the D major seventh) that appear in measures 2 and 3 (and again in measures 22 and 23, followed by the alternating B major seventh and A major seventh passage in measures 48 through 55) are reminiscent of the expansive chordal passages of both “From far, from eve and morning” and “Bredon Hill.”\textsuperscript{509} In measure 4 of “Clun,” the rhythm of the first and second violin mirrors that of measure 4 of “Is my team ploughing?”.

Finally, the rhythmic fingerprint reappears in “Clun” in the vocal line in measures 8-9, 12-13, 15, 19, 28-29, 32-33, and 59. (See examples 4.23, 4.24, and 4.25 as representative examples; Johnson also remarks on this in his dissertation: “the rhythm of two quavers followed by a triplet of quavers over two beats is brought back from “Bredon Hill.”\textsuperscript{510}) Here, though, unlike its appearance and significance in “Bredon Hill” and in Songs of Travel (where it indicated indicated

\textsuperscript{508} See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E Housman’s A Shropshire Lad by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell,” 75-79. Calloway connects the change of tonal centers to Vaughan Williams’s use of mediant-related chords and modal inflections, both of which are also correct. However, since Vaughan Williams was such a careful reader of poetic text, it is best to consider Lusk’s suggestion regarding the textual reasons for shifting tonal centers.

\textsuperscript{509} Calloway erroneously refers to the chords in the first two full measures as F-sharp diminished chords. See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E Housman’s A Shropshire Lad by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Arthur Somervell,” 75. (It is possible he simply forgot to type the word “half” before the word “diminished”.

\textsuperscript{510} Lawrence George Johnson, “A Shropshire Lad in Song: Three Tenor Song Cycles based on A. E. Housman’s “A Shropshire Lad”; “On Wenlock Edge” by Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The Land of Lost Content” by John Ireland, and “Ludlow and Teme” by Ivor Gurney,” 69.
the Vagabond’s carefree nature, what he wanted out of life, and love), the
fingerprint highlights both the quiet of the rivers Ony and Teme and Clun, and
sorrow and trouble, as well as the idea that one can only lay one’s troubles down a
very long way from here (when one’s life ends).

Example 4.23. “Clun,” mm. 8-10, voice only (fingerprint).

Example 4.24. “Clun,” mm 12-14, voice only (fingerprint).

Example 4.25. “Clun,” mm. 15-18, voice only (fingerprint)

The poem contains seven quatrains, and it is not until the third quatrain
that disquiet starts to shadow the idyllic setting put forth by Housman. Even in
the peacefulness of four of the “quietest places under the sun,” there were still
“sorrows,” and “lads knew trouble trouble at Knighton / when I was a Knighton
lad.” (lines 7 and 8). These troubles were such that even London, that bastion of
industrialization, the “town built ill,” that appears in the fourth quatrain cannot
contain them. As Mellers puts it, “In neither town nor country is there abiding refuge.”\textsuperscript{511} And Mellers continues to point out that the anxiety of this poem is evident from the start.\textsuperscript{512} The seemingly innocuous violin descent from C to A that is then echoed by an F-sharp to D descent in the lower strings accompanied by the oscillating F-sharp half-diminished seventh to D major seventh chords in the piano make the tonal center ambiguous. (Vaughan Williams uses this C to A descent again for “Knighton lad” in measure 21—where the end of the vocal line overlaps with the instrumental beginning of the third verse. This was most likely purposeful on the composer’s part to emphasize the unidentified “troubles” of the Knighton lad.) Vaughan Williams continues to perpetuate the uncertainty in the first verse by having a tritone appear in the piano’s arpeggios (between F and B) eight times between measures 5 through 11 combined with the suggested Phrygian mode. (See example 4.26, “Clun” mm 5-11, piano only.)

\textsuperscript{511} Wilfrid Mellers, \textit{Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion}, 40.

In the second verse it is clear that there were sorrows and trouble at Knighton when the narrator was a Knighton lad. These sorrows and troubles manifest as chromatic lines and arpeggios, and the previous pentatonic vocal line is, while still pentatonic, now rife with enharmonic spellings (E-flats change to D sharps, B-flats to A-sharps). Vaughan Williams continues to use chromaticism as an indicator of trouble and sorrow throughout the remainder of the song.

The musical uncertainty that accompanied the lad in the first verse (the tritone between F and B combined with the Phrygian mode) is used again for the third verse to describe London. The sorrows and troubles that existed for the lad in Knighton remained with him in London, and, as can be seen in the fourth verse (and the second B section of the song, mm. 35-41), those troubles and sorrows only grow as the lad gets older. The chromatic lines and enharmonic spellings that the composer used as indicators of trouble and sorrow in the first B section (mm. 15-21) appear again in the second B section, but this time the music is more animated and agitated at the composer’s direction, as one verse ends while the
next (fifth verse) begins (mm. 42-43). There is no instrumental interlude between verses.

The descending three-note motive that began the piece (C-B-A in the violins) heralds the fifth verse, but now appears in the piano. Vaughan Williams continues with a pattern of descending three-note motives in the strings and inner voices of the piano. This verse ends with the accompaniment oscillating between B major seventh and G-sharp minor seventh chords as the lad realizes that neither London nor Knighton is suitable for laying down the weight of his burdens.

Vaughan Williams chose a poem to end his cycle that included biblical references to the end of days: “Where doomsday may thunder and lighten” (line 23). Archie Burnett cites the following verses from the bible as Rev. 4:5 “And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices; Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;” Rev. 8: 5 “Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake;” Rev. 11: 19 “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake;”

Calloway also notices the musical connection between this (fifth) verse and the opening of the song and well as the continual descending three-note motive. See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s A Shropshire Lad by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, and Arthur Somervell,” 78. Note: the inner voices in the piano part also include the occasional descending four-note motive, see in particular measures 44-47.

Calloway sees this oscillation between B major seventh and G-sharp minor seventh as a set up for the eventual move to A major. This is entirely possible, but I think there is a textual reason for it. See Edwin S. Calloway, “A Comparative Study of Three Song Cycles Based on A. E. Housman’s A Shropshire Lad by Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, and Arthur Somervell,” 78.
an earthquake, and great hail; and Rev. 16: 18 “And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.”

For Vaughan Williams, though, the emphasis was probably more on the phrase after “Where doomsday may thunder and lighten,” that is “And little ‘twill matter to one,” because the accompaniment is oscillating F and E-flat chords (mm. 63-64), transitioning, via C-sharp and B, to oscillating A major and B major chords (mm. 65-66). These chords descend step-wise, and they encompass a pentatonic whole-tone scale (F, E-flat, C-sharp, B, A), perhaps suggesting the death that comes, finally, at the end of the cycle. However, it does not come as thunder and lightning. It comes, pianississimo, molto tranquillo, on an A major chord after alternating between A major and B major. (See example 4.27 mm. 74-77.)

The last verse is quiet and contemplative (with a tempo marking of Molto più lento and the direction to sing pianissimo and tranquillo), and comes after what Mellers refers to as “wailing appoggiaturas” in the lower strings. This quiet verse eventually leads to the quiet ending (and death) in A major, which Mellers suggests is reminiscent of youth and hope, but this is a faint reminiscence (ppp).

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516 Wilfrid Mellers, Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion, 41.
Example 4.27. “Clun,” mm. 74-77.

Musically, “Clun” is not an epilogue to *On Wenlock Edge* in the same way that “I have trod the upward and the downward slope” is to *Songs of Travel*. You will not find exact melodies from the earlier songs reappearing in “Clun.” However, “Clun” is an epilogue nonetheless and a fitting end to the cycle. Textually and musically the piece brings us full circle. It completes the series of six vignettes and ties them together. (As I stated at the beginning of my discussion of this song, Vaughan Williams chose to set a poem that contained a rural/urban dichotomy as well as an idealization of a more rural area, the past/present time, as well as his musical “nods” to other songs in the cycle, even if he did not quote melodic material exactly.) In 1997 Michael Jameson claimed that “Clun” might have been started before Vaughan Williams went to Paris to
study with Ravel, but he offers no proof for this statement. Mellers also claims that “Clun” was written first, “as early as 1906,” but, like Jameson, does not explain why.

* * *

Vaughan Williams’s choice to set Housman to music was not unusual in 1908. The inadequacies that Edith Sitwell, Louis Kronenberg, and R. P. Blackmur found with Housman’s verse, i.e., that it was too simplistic, too bare, and unable to convey complex emotions or thoughts, were the very things that made it palatable to composers. Kate Kennedy explains:

> Of all English poets, Housman enjoys the distinction of being one of the most frequently set to music. His sparse, pared-down technique of presenting complex emotions in simple language lends itself ideally to musical treatment.

She goes on to list composers who had set Housman’s verse for nearly a fifty-year span between 1904 and 1952. She lists, aside from *On Wenlock Edge*, settings by Arthur Somervell (1904), George Butterworth (1911), Ivor Gurney (some individual songs in 1908 and sets in 1919 and 1926), John Ireland (1920-21) Ernest Moeran (1920 and 1924), and C. W. Orr (who set 24 of Housman’s poems.

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520 Kate Kennedy, “‘...And lads are in love with the grave’: The peculiar appeal of Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad*,” 31.
between 1921 and 1952).\textsuperscript{521} A quick survey of his output shows that many of Housman’s poems were written in four-line stanzas, and many tell a timeless story to which people can relate.

The non-specific war and the non-specific lads within Housman’s verse probably further added to its appeal to Vaughan Williams and to audiences. \textit{A Shropshire Lad} was published between the two Boer Wars in 1896\textsuperscript{522}, but the first Boer War itself is not mentioned specifically in any poem. Even though the Great War had not begun, it was certainly on the horizon by the time Vaughan Williams composed \textit{On Wenlock Edge}.\textsuperscript{523} In her 2008 article Kennedy discusses the constant awareness of a mobilized military at the fringes of society.\textsuperscript{524} She also explains that because of its lack of specificity, \textit{A Shropshire Lad}, like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, came to represent everything for everyone: the boys who made it back, the boys who did not, the grieving relative, and the mourning society. It met an emotional need.\textsuperscript{525} Vaughan Williams, in setting these poems, also helped to fill this emotional need.

\textsuperscript{521} See Kate Kennedy, “‘…And lads are in love with the grave’: The peculiar appeal of Housman’s \textit{A Shropshire Lad},” 31. She does not mention, unfortunately, Vaughan Williams’s second Housman cycle, \textit{Along the Field}, which he composed in 1927 and revised in 1952.

\textsuperscript{522} The first Boer war took place from 1880-1881, the second lasted from 1899-1902.

\textsuperscript{523} The famous historian, G. M. Trevelyan, who was a friend of Vaughan Williams, discusses many of the minute details both in England and in Europe that led up to World War I. See George Macaulay Trevelyan, \textit{History of England} (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926), in particular pp. 700-727.

\textsuperscript{524} Kate Kennedy, “‘…And lads are in love with the grave’: The peculiar appeal of Housman’s \textit{A Shropshire Lad},” 31.

\textsuperscript{525} Kate Kennedy, “‘…And lads are in love with the grave’: The peculiar appeal of Housman’s \textit{A Shropshire Lad},” 31.
In choosing poems from *A Shropshire Lad* Vaughan Williams also maintained and developed a thread that first presented itself in the Barnes songs discussed in Chapter Two, and continued with the Stevenson songs in Chapter Three: the divide between the country and the city, or, to put it another way, the rural and the urban. In Housman’s Shropshire there are references to both real and imagined places. Both present an escape and a kind of pastoral idyll from what had become the dreadfulness of urban living with all its poverty and crime. But Housman’s pastoral was not completely idyllic. His Shropshire contained troubles, sadness, loss, and death. By choosing to set these poems, Vaughan Williams was reminding his listeners that the rural was, in addition to a panacea from the city, also a real place where real life continued to happen. Of his biographers, Percy M. Young was the only one to notice this. Young explained, “Back to nature meant a return to grimness. Vaughan Williams’s comprehension of this factor gave him a natural claim to set the poetry of Housman.”

George Hayes explains that the countryside has its own problems: “[I]t is a place of crime and punishment—a place of betrayal…It is a place of retrospective

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526 Harold Bloom, in his book *A. E. Housman*, claims that Housman altered the geography of Shropshire to suit himself so much that Housman’s Shropshire is closer to Tolkien’s Middle-earth in terms of accuracy than Hardy’s Wessex. (See Harold Bloom, *A. E. Housman* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 34.).

527 Saylor refers to this kind of pastoralism “hard” pastoralism. It is a kind of pastoral writing that viewed (or views) “soft” pastoralism as unrealistic. Saylor suggests that writers of “hard” pastoralism (such as Thomas Hardy in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, Matthew Arnold in *Dover Beach* and George Crabbe in *The Village*) provide us with works that “present an unsentimental view of nature and the countryside, free from escapist trappings.”. See Eric Saylor, “’It’s Not lambkins Frisking At All’: English Pastoral Music and the Great War,” 43.

528 Percy M. Young, *Vaughan Williams*, 37.
In short, even with the occasional imagined place name (e.g. “Bredon Hill”), Housman’s Shropshire was very like real life, the real rural England. The troubles, sorrows, and betrayals (and crime and punishment, and retrospective longing as Haynes puts it) existed both in the past and the present. In the poems Vaughan Williams chose, these trials were evident in ancient Britain as well as in the nation of the present. The troubles that existed for the man as a Knighton lad had only increased as he got older. (In other words, your troubles will only cease to plague you when you die.) Thus, this real England, this rural England had existed and would continue to exist. The country and the landscape (and the place names, both real and imagined) provided a way to legitimize a sense of national identity when other ways of establishing English national identity began to fade away. As Stephen Haseler put it:

as the power of Britain declined, so ‘Englishness’, as it had done so often before, re-touched its image and images….Robin Hood, Dick Whittington, John Bull, Britannia, the explorers and military heroes (like Wellington and Nelson), the strong, colourful, ‘hearts of oak’, ‘free-born Englishman’ image—all gave way to a more moderate, domestic, misty rustic, even twee, image.  

Domestic and twee are not exactly words that spring to mind when reading Housman’s verse (nor does it really apply to Vaughan Williams or his music), but the ideological shift from military explorers to the more rustic or rural image certainly applies.

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CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE

The songs this study has examined have been shown to depict Englishness or English national identity across a wide variety of registers. There is idealization of the countryside, pastoral nostalgia, rural activities and place name identification—in “Linden Lea,” “Blackmwore by the Stour,” “Winter’s Willow,” and several of the Housman settings: “On Wenlock Edge,” “Bredon Hill,” and “Clun.” We find the gypsy trope and gypsophilia in the Songs of Travel and the trope of the wanderer in “Linden Lea” and Songs of Travel. There is also the incorporation of the past versus the present, both historical and personal, in “Blackmwore by the Stour,” and most poignantly in the song cycle On Wenlock Edge. Rather than Englishness or English national identity being displayed as “naïve, outdoor youthfulness” as Banfield referred to it, I think Vaughan Williams is thoughtfully widening his approach to Englishness. It is not merely the outdoors (although that is a large part of it), and it is not merely hearkening back to folksongs. Likewise, the composer does not limit himself to one aspect of Englishness in the songs. Instead, Vaughan Williams employs multiple aspects of Englishness throughout many of his songs, and this Englishness pervades his entire career. In this dissertation I have merely identified the foundations of the Englishness/English national identity in the songs written prior

531 Stephen Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 87.
532 See Trevor Hold, Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers, 102-123.
533 See Trevor Hold, Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers, 102-123; Roger Savage, “Vaughan Williams, the Romany Ryes, and the Cambridge Ritualists,” 383-418; Laura Tunbridge, The Song Cycle, 131-135.
to the Great War. What this study has not purported to do was to study all of the songs composed by Vaughan Williams before the Great War. I have been concerned only with those songs that engaged with aspects of Englishness or English national identity.

The aspects of Englishness or English national identity displayed by these eighteen songs can be characterized as what Eric Saylor would refer to as “soft pastoralism” moving to incorporate “hard pastoralism”. Saylor draws these terms from literary criticism, specifically the work of Terry Gifford. As Saylor explains it, soft pastoralism refers, broadly speaking, to a poetry or prose that describes the rural in direct contrast to the urban. In this light, the country is always superior to the city. Saylor goes on to say:

This “soft pastoralism” parallels the Classical withdrawal from the city to the simplicity of Arcadia and likewise reflects the Romantic ideal of nature as an alternative to unsavory modernity.

In particular, the references to folksong-like idioms (i.e. folksong flavor), modal harmonies, and texts that venerate the countryside go far in establishing this “soft

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534 Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1-8. Gifford explains that in literary circles there are at least three types of “pastoral”: 1. As an historical literary form or device, typically poetic, featuring shepherds, and some departure and return—usually from an urban to a rural setting; 2. The second, “soft” pastoralism usually refers to a type of poetry or prose that describes the country in contrast to the urban, with the underlying aim of portraying the country as the superior locale; 3. The third, “hard,” pastoral is a reaction against the other two categories. It is an unsentimental view of the countryside and nature, and is free from the trappings of sentimentality and escapism. (See also Eric Saylor, “‘It’s Not Lambkins Frisking At All’: English Pastoral Music and the Great War,” 42-43.)


536 Eric Saylor, “‘It’s Not Lambkins Frisking At All’: English Pastoral Music and the Great War,” 42.
Vaughan Williams also created a rhythmic fingerprint that he used for the purpose of musical story telling, and this fingerprint has also become a musical identifier of the composer’s. Hard pastoralism, according to Gifford, displays the difficulties of rural life. (In addition, Saylor connects the use of “hard pastoralism” with Vaughan Williams’s Pastoral Symphony (1922). Specifically, the symphony’s connection with the war and death combined with the composer’s use of his past compositional practices, such as parallel triads, restricted dynamic levels, and a modal harmonic language. The realities of rural life (gales, death, troubles), appear in the last cycle discussed this document.

Throughout this dissertation I have shown Vaughan Williams’s remarkable sensitivity to the poetry he set. The composer used a wide variety of musical means to express his readings of the text: the use of modality to reference the countryside or country activities, the tramping motive to express the movement of the Vagabond, the use of the rhythmic fingerprint to communicate the state of the love story between Beauty and the Vagabond in Songs of Travel or contentment and joy in On Wenlock Edge, the use of keys to express mood and emotion, and, overall, the importance of the accompaniment in the expression of the text and in the musical telling of each story.

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537 Saylor also mentions modal or “modally inflected new-tonal harmonies” as a feature of modernist composers like Vaughan Williams, Holst, and Butterworth who had “come of age in the Edwardian and Georgian eras and did so after passing through the crucible of the folk music movement.” (Eric Saylor, “‘It’s Not Lambkins Frisking At All’: English Pastoral Music and the Great War,” 45.)

538 This was most clearly seen in On Wenlock Edge.

539 See Eric Saylor, “‘It’s Not Lambkins Frisking At All’: English Pastoral Music and the Great War,” 48-49.
Vaughan Williams was an extraordinary art song composer, yet he is rarely mentioned in surveys of the genre. In Geoffrey Chew’s “Song” article for *Grove Music Online*, Vaughan Williams gets barely a nod, and even then it is in conjunction with others of his generation who collected folksong:

New song repertories, largely along traditional lines, developed in several European countries, such as Finland and Lithuania, in the early 20th century. Collectors of folksong were active in Great Britain (Cecil Sharp, Vaughan Williams) and Hungary (Bartók) from at least the first years of the century, and their activity led not only to the rediscovery of folk repertories but also to the renewal of the composition of art song. The British song repertory (Vaughan Williams, Warlock, Frank Bridge, Ireland etc.) was marked by close attention to declamation in the traditional manner (this partly deriving from French influence) and to the quality of the poetry set; it reached a peak in the songs of Britten and Tippett.  

It is clear from Chew’s article that he considered Vaughan Williams important in renewing art song composition in Britain, but the quote above is still the only mention the composer receives. (To be fair, England and English composers in general are not overly represented in this article.) Vaughan Williams is not mentioned at all in Norbert Böker-Heil’s article on Lied in *Grove Music Online*, but Böker-Heil is quite strict in his definition of Lied as “a song in the German vernacular” rather than using Lied as a more general term for art song.  

Likewise, the composer is not mentioned in *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, which also uses the strict definition of the term.  

Arthur Jacobs included a


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brief discussion of “Linden Lea,” *Songs of Travel, The House of Life, Four Poems of Fredegonde Shove*, and “Orpheus with his Lute” from *Three Poems by Walt Whitman* and *Along the Field* in his article on song from the British Isles. More recently (2010), Turnbull included a discussion of English pastoralism, which focused primarily on Vaughan Williams’s cycle *On Wenlock Edge*. In her chapter she discusses the general trend of English composers to return to texts that somehow assert their national identity. Specifically she talks about settings of A. E. Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* by Vaughan Williams, Butterworth (1912) and Somervell (1904), and how, because of the text’s association with the landscape and the Boer War, these pieces—especially the cycle by Vaughan Williams—became landmark pieces. These scant mentions in larger studies of the genre of song, Lied, or song cycle are similar to what occurs in Vaughan Williams scholarship where the composer’s art songs are similarly under-represented. That is to say, his songs are either ignored altogether, or are mentioned only briefly.

That Vaughan Williams was expressing Englishness in the years prior to the Great War was not extraordinary, and that, as a composer, he was doing so through song was equally not extraordinary. Scott explains that in the 1890s (when Vaughan Williams was in his twenties) the character of a typical or traditional Englishman was that of a patriotic Englishman. That is to say,

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544 Laura Turnbull, *The Song Cycle*, 131-135. Ironically, Vaughan Williams is discussed in the chapter titled “The death of the song cycle”.

545 See Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, for an idea of the sheer magnitude of English song composition in the early twentieth century.
patriotism was “built in.”[546] Scott goes on to say that threats posed to English national identity were “met by attempts to recapture some imagined rural ideal.”[547] The attempts to recapture this rural ideal often took the form of folksong collecting, the use of folksong idioms, and the veneration of the countryside via the texts chosen. Vaughan Williams was not alone in folksong collecting (George Butterworth, Gustav Holst, and Ernest John Moeran also collected folksongs, to name just a few), nor was he alone in choosing to set texts that encapsulated the rural ideal prior to the Great War. Several composers did the same. Even if the list were limited to the authors discussed in this dissertation (William Barnes, R. L. Stevenson, and A. E. Housman), the list of composers setting texts by those poets prior to the war is long indeed. It includes composers such as Arthur Bliss, George Butterworth, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Henry Walford Davies, Ernest Farrar, John Foulds, Henry Balfour Gardiner, Ivor Gurney, John Ireland, Ernest John Moeran, Roger Quilter, and Arthur Somervell.[548]

It is possible to argue that Vaughan Williams never intended his art songs as emblems of Englishness or English national identity. Whenever he was confronted with questions of “meaning” in one of his compositions, he typically denied any such meaning. In fact, he once remarked to Roy Douglas, his musical assistant, “It never seems to occur to people that a man might just want to write a

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[548] For a more thorough list of English composers writing song during this period and a discussion of the texts they set, see Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*.
A somewhat more vehement denial appears in a letter the composer wrote to Mr. Maurice Reeve in January 1957:

You kindly ask whether there is any meaning attached to my symphonies. I admit that I have called four of them Sea, London, Pastoral, and Antartica—in the Sea Symphony the words locate the emotion, and the mottoes the Antartica, but probably the music would get on just as well without them. But I hope that the words and the mottoes set the right mood to listen to the music. That is all I wish and all I hope for…I feel very angry with certain critics who will have it that my 4th Symphony “means” war, and my 5th “means” peace—and so on. If people get help in appreciating music from this descent from the general to the particular, good luck to them. But the opposite can be equally true. It is said that Beethoven’s tragic Muss es sein movement in his last quartet arose out of a quarrel with his landlady!

Yet what the composer (or any artist or writer) intends at the conception of a work is often unaligned with the work’s subsequent reception. What we do

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551 A telling example of this phenomenon is the reception, both contemporary to its publication and to its recent resurgence in popularity due to the films, of J. R. R. Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings. His 30 June 1955 response to a book review that appeared in the New York Times on 5 June 1955 reads as follows:

“It is not ‘about’ anything but itself. Certainly it has no allegorical intentions, general, particular, or topical, moral, religious, or political. The only criticism that annoyed me was one that it ‘contained no religion’ (and ‘no Women’, but that does not matter, and not true anyway). It is a monotheistic world of ‘natural theology’. The odd fact that there are no churches, temples, or religious rites and ceremonies is simply part of the historical climate depicted. It will be sufficiently explained if (as now seems likely) the Silmarillion and other legends of the First and Second Ages are published. I am in any case myself a Christian; but the ‘Third Age’ was not a Christian world…

There are of course certain things and themes that move me specially. The inter-relations between the ‘noble’ and the ‘simple’ (or common, vulgar) for instance. The ennoblement of the ignoble I find specially moving. I am (obviously) much in love with plants and above all trees, and always have been; and I find human maltreatment of them as hard to bear as some find ill-treatment of animals.” (Letter #165 in Humphrey Carpenter, ed. The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981: 217-221.)

Despite Tolkien’s remonstrations, his texts (and the subsequent films) seem to portray the battle between industrialization and the idealic, bucolic country life. This is true both in the presentation of the people involved as well as the countryside. Take, for example, the way the hobbits were portrayed versus the orcs or Uruk-hai. The hobbits were almost childlike, in both stature and attitude, and their world was devoid of anything that smacked of industrialization. It was, on the contrary, presented as a charming, idealic, rural community. The orcs and Uruk-hai,
know is what Vaughan Williams intended in general, as a composer. He was fond of quoting his teacher, Hubert Parry: “Write choral music as befits an Englishman and a democrat.”

(After his long career, it is perhaps safe to say that Vaughan Williams took this to mean “Write music as befits an Englishman and a democrat,” and Vaughan Williams’s own *On National Music* is surely further grist to this mill.) As Byron Adams reminds us, Vaughan Williams was a multi-faceted, intelligent, and sometimes inconsistent man. He was a composer who “enjoyed periodic tramps through lanes and over downs” and who worked to preserve English folk music, but this is also the man who composed the *London Symphony*, titled after the city he loved so much and in which he preferred to live.

**Epilogue: War and After**

After 1909 and the success of *On Wenlock Edge*, Vaughan Williams virtually abandoned the genre of the solo art song. It was not until 1925, seven

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however, were either “fallen” elves (woodland or natural beings) or, in the case of the Uruk-hai, an engineered race of evildoers who were huge, violent, armed, and prone to industry. The presentation of the orcs’ and Uruk-hai’s blind devotion to Mordor, Saruman, and Sauron, and their militaristic precision is even reminiscent of the precision of Hitler’s army and the blind devotion (or paralyzing fear) he garnered.

Therefore, despite Tolkien’s protestations and his original intent (if he is being honest), the reception of his texts was very much in line with contemporary attitudes.

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554 There are two sets of pieces that Vaughan Williams composed during this time that Michael Kennedy considers art song and lists them in his Catalogue as such. In 1914 Vaughan Williams composed Four Hymns (“Lord! Come Away,” text by Bishop Jeremy Taylor, “Who is this Fair One?,” text by Isaac Watts (from Hymns and Spiritual Songs), “Come Love, Come Lord,” text by Richard Crashaw (from the hymn of St. Thomas, in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament), and “Evening Hymn,” text “O gladsome Light,” translated from the Greek by Robert Bridges) (See
years after the official end of World War I, that he revisited the genre. There is a similar gap surrounding the years of the Second World War when the composer again abandoned solo art song. It would be easy to claim that the composer abandoned the genre during these years because of the wars. However, there are varying reasons for his choosing to explore other genres at this time.

During the first the First World War (1914-1918), the composer wrote very little music. In 1914 he enlisted as a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps, after the war broke out on 4 August. Catalogs of his works reveal that many of his pieces or collections associated with the war years were written either in the early part of 1914, or were pieces collected and/or edited much earlier. While there was quite a lot of music making in the troops at the instigation of Private “Williams,” there was, understandably, not a lot of time for original composition. Moreover, after writing his second Housman cycle, Along the Field, in 1927, we do not see another art song from him until 1939 when he set M. E. Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 73.) While these pieces are for solo voice (tenor) with piano and viola obbligato, they are quite properly hymns and not, to my mind, art songs. The second set of pieces, Merciless Beauty, was composed in 1921. This is a set of three rondels for high voice and string trio or piano. The texts, “Your eyën two”, “So hath your beauty”, and “Since I from love” are all attributed to Geoffrey Chaucer. This (1921) set is the only example that could be called art song during that time. (See Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 86.)


556 The music making in the troops ranged from the casual sort, from Vaughan Williams accompanying his army friend, Harry Steggles, while Harry sang raucous songs like “When Father Papered the Parlour” when they were still in Chelsea, to the composer playing organ and arranging chamber music evenings when his troop had moved to Watford. When he was stationed in Écoivres, France he organized a group a fellow soldiers into a choir. (See Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 118-121.)
Fuller’s “The Willow Whistle” for voice and pipe. It appears, though, that this was an isolated incident on the composer’s part, for it is not until 1952, seven years after the end of the Second World War, that he once again began exploring art song. Since the composer was in his late sixties by the beginning of the Second World War, he was not involved in active service. However, he served as he could both at home and musically. Compositionally he wrote a lot of overtly patriotic/nationalist choral pieces and film music.

The years between 1914 and 1939 were formidable ones for the composer. They were years of increasing national and international recognition and acclaim, coupled with devastating loss. The cost of the Great War on the composer’s circle of friends was particularly high. On Saturday, the 21st of October, 1916, Vaughan Williams sent the following letter to Gustav Holst:

Dear V.

Works such as A Hymn of Freedom (1939), Six Choral Songs—to be Sung in Time of War (1940), Prelude: The New Commonwealth (1940), Song: The New Commonwealth (1940), England, My England (1941), A Call for Free Nations (1941), Five Wartime Hymns (1941), The Airmen’s Hymn (1942), Thanksgiving for Victory/A Song for Thanksgiving (1944). Many of the films he provided music for during the years of the second world war were, if not overtly patriotic, at the very least, pro-British: 49th Parallel (1940-41), Coastal Command (1942), The People’s Land (1943), and Stricken Peninsula (1944-45). He also gave lecture-recitals at the White Horse Hotel in Dorking. Non-musical service included offering the use of his field for the District Council, organizing an air raid shelter, providing a home for a child from the city (which did not end up working out since the child got homesick), collecting salvage (i.e. aluminium, paper, rags, etc.), and working for the Dorking Refugee Committee. (See Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 229-230.)

In the years immediately after this war, people tended to use the term ‘Great War,’ although today the label ‘First World War’ is more commonly used. In this chapter I will use the terms interchangeably. Tom Lawson discusses the use of these labels in his article “‘The Free-Masonry of Sorrow’? English National Identities and the Memorialization of the Great War in Britain, 1919-1931,” History and Memory 20, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 98.

Vaughan Williams often addressed letters to Gustav Holst “Dear V” or “My dear V.” Holst’s name, before he changed it, was Gustav von Holst. Presumably “V” is both a nickname and a reference to Holst’s original name.
I was most touched by your letter. I’ve indeed longed to be home in many ways during the last month—but in other ways I should not like to come home for good till everything is over or in some other normal way.

Remember me to all the Morleyites and wish them good luck from me—and I shall think of all your schoolgirls on all saints day.

I sometimes dread coming back to normal life with so many gaps—especially of course George Butterworth—he has left most of his MS to me—and now I hear that Ellis is killed—out of those 7 who joined up together in August 1914 only 3 are left—I sometimes think now that it is wrong to have made friends with people much younger than oneself—because soon there will only be the middle aged left—and I have got out of touch with most of my contemporary friends—but then there is always you & I thank Heaven we have never got out of touch & I don’t see why we ever should.

Goodbye.

Yrs
RVW

Six of the seven who had joined up together were (along with Vaughan Williams) the composers George Butterworth (1885-1916), Denis Browne (1888-1915), composer and pedagogue (and eventual brother-in-law) Reginald Owen Morris (1886-1948), concert promoter Francis Bevis Ellis (1883-1916), and the conductor Geoffrey Toye (1889-1942). Butterworth, Browne, and Ellis all died during the war. Vaughan Williams had dealt with death artistically in *On Wenlock Edge*—specifically (and most poignantly) in “Is my team ploughing?”—but encountering it in life was something altogether different. At the time that he joined up, Vaughan Williams was very close to Butterworth. He had long

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561 Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 115 and 122. I have yet to conclusively identify the seventh member of the group, although Vaughan Williams could be thinking about Holst’s brother, Emil. Emil was able to join in active service, but Holst was declared unfit for military service due to several health problems. Holst did serve during the war, working with the YMCA, but he was unable to participate in active service with Vaughan Williams as he wished.
counted the younger man among his close group of friends, and Butterworth was responsible for realizing, on the eve of war, that the score of the London Symphony was in Germany and might never be seen again. Butterworth then organized the copying of the band parts and Butterworth, along with the musicologist Edward Dent (with Vaughan Williams’s help), was able to produce a working score. Also, as the above letter states, he left all his music manuscripts to Vaughan Williams in his will. In addition to the loss suffered during the years between the wars, Vaughan Williams would meet and become friends with such important figures as the composer, pianist, and editor Hubert Foss (1899-1953), the musicologist and composer Cecil Forsyth (1870-1941), and composer Gordon Jacob (1895-1984), but he would also lose his teachers, Hubert Parry (1848-1918), Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), and Charles Wood (1866-1926). At the end of this period he suffered his greatest loss. On 25 May 1934 Gustav Holst died suddenly at the age of fifty-nine, and Vaughan Williams lost his best friend and musical confidant.

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562 Vaughan Williams had considered Butterworth a friend since at least 1910 but possibly earlier. In her biography of her husband, Ursula Vaughan Williams includes a portion of a letter from Gustav Holst from 1903 that reads “I wonder if it would be possible to lock oneself up for so many hours every day. If so, it would be far easier for me than for you as you have so many friends”. (Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 92.) Ursula then goes on to list Cecil Sharp, S. P. Waddington, Hugh Allen, Percy Grainger, Nicholas, René, and Ivor Gatty, George Butterworth, Henry Ley, Theodore and Crompton Llewelyn Davies, George and Robert Trevelyan, G. E. Moore, Maurice Amos, Martin Shaw, and then, of course, Gustav himself. (p. 92) However, this all appears in Chapter Five of her biography, which covers the years 1906-1911, so it is unclear exactly when George Butterworth began to be counted as a friend.

563 Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 114. Ursula also explains that in 1959, after the composer’s death, inquiries were made at Breitkopf, but they had lost so many scores and records during the war due to bombing that they were no help (p. 114).
The years between the wars were full of change for Britain as well. The country was attempting to recover from the devastation wrought by the war, and politically, issues that had been simmering or on the threshold prior to the outbreak of World War I and subsequently put on the back burner came to the fore once the war was over (issues like Irish independence and the Women’s Suffrage movement, for example). Additionally, between 1918 and 1939 there were seven general elections in Britain. All of this must have contributed to the general feeling of upheaval in a country trying to recover.

Surrounded by so much change and loss, coupled with the natural shifts in society that occur through the course of a composer’s career, it is no surprise that Vaughan Williams’s music might reflect the crisis the country and the composer had experienced, the subsequent upheaval in the government, and the personal tragedies the composer endured. Indeed, Hugh Ottoway and Alain Frogley remark that the composer’s third period of composition (1919-1934), was “a period of immense vigour and variety in which three trends are particularly striking: a deepening of the visionary aspect; as extending of the expressive

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564 Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 100. Specifically, there were general elections on 14 December 1918, 15 November 1922, 6 December 1923, 29 October 1924, 30 May 1929, 27 October 1931, and 14 November 1935. There was supposed to be a general election in 1940 but this was deferred because of World War II. In any case, this was an astonishing number of general elections held in such a short amount of time. The causes were due, as Ward explains, the crisis and change brought about because of the Great War, the issues put on hold that subsequently had to be dealt with, the financial crisis, and then, looming in the background, the threat of another war.
range, embracing new forms of imagery; and a simultaneous working on markedly different levels.”565 Stephen Connock also explains:

There is music written after 1919 which could not have been conceived before the experience of war. There is a disembodied, detached and solitary feel to the song cycle Along the Field (1927) or to Motion and Stillness from Four Poems by Fredegond Shove (1925). The sense of loneliness and sadness pervades A Pastoral Symphony (1920-1921), especially the fourth movement, where Vaughan Williams remembers the suffering and loss of so many in Northern France.566

Art song, that most intimate of genres, would reflect the change in Vaughan Williams’s style, and would encompass the loss he suffered and the tragedies he had witnessed during his war service. Specifically the songs are some of those contained within the Four Poems by Fredegond Shove (1925), Three Poems by Walt Whitman (1925), Three Songs from Shakespeare (1925), and Along the Field (1927). I refer to these songs as “songs of crisis” after Anne Wright's 1984 book.567 Each text that Wright discusses encompasses the period surrounding the First World War, and each registers some kind of response to that war.568 In her book, Wright discusses the meaning of crisis. As she explains, in addition to crisis encompassing the perception of change, it can also be expressed as “the


fracturing or dismantling of personal relations, of social institutions, of civilization…the site and scope of the breakdown may be individual, national, cultural or cosmic…Crisis is the distant or imminent threat or cataclysmic disruption of the familiar.”

Crisis, in the sense that it applies to Vaughan Williams’s songs, is indicated by the change in the composer’s style as well as in the texts he chose to set.

However, not all of the songs contained within the sets by Shove, Whitman, Shakespeare, and Housman demonstrate ‘crisis’. A few revert to the composer’s pre-war compositional displays of Englishness, as seen in the Barnes songs, *Songs of Travel* and *On Wenlock Edge*. In addition, the ability to reference what Ottaway and Frogley refer to as “earlier modes of expression” is another one of Vaughan Williams’s hallmarks, and a technique he returns to from his second period of composition (1908-1914) onward.

“The Water Mill” from *Four Poems by Fredegond Shove* (1925) and “When Icicles Hang by the Wall” from *Three Songs from Shakespeare* (1925) are examples of songs from the “crisis” period that reflect pre-war techniques. “The Water Mill” more than any other song of Vaughan Williams, pays homage to the song composition of Franz Schubert. One is immediately reminded of “Gretchen am Spinnrade” as the piano plays the part of the water mill. In addition to the rural activities described by the text, the piano accompaniment mimics the motion of the mill and reminds one of

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Schubert’s depiction of the spinning wheel in “Gretchen am Spinnrade” (see example 5.1).

Example 5.1. Vaughan Williams, “The Water Mill” from *Four Poems by Fredegond Shove*, mm. 1-4, piano only.

The story presented by the poem is a country story, one that begins in the very early morning with a description of the mill and the small animal life that surrounds the mill and continues with an account of the daily activities of the miller and his family. The poem is at once specific and general: it describes a very specific mill at a very specific place with particular individuals (the miller, his wife, their daughter, and the young men who come for her), yet it could be describing any part of the English countryside that hosts watermills, and any miller, since the miller is not named. The type of the story, one that discusses country activities, is very like the subject matter found in the poems by William Barnes—particularly “Blackmowre by the Stour.” There is no discussion of death

571 Unlike Schubert’s miller in *Die Schöne Müllerin*, we do not know the identity of the miller. See “The genesis of the poetic cycle” in Susan Youens, *Die Schöne Müllerin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 4-7. Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827), author of the texts that Schubert set, mirrored the characters in *Die Schöne Müllerin* on select members of a circle of friends of his that met at the Bauhofstrasse home of Friedrich August von Stägemann (1763-1840), a privy councilor and amateur poet who was interested in old German traditions. Friedrich August’s daughter, Hedwig, played the original beautiful miller maid when this group of friends staged their original Liederspiel. Müller himself played the role of the journeyman miller. Wilhelm Hensel, a painter, was the hunter, Friedrich Förster the country squire (or Junker), and Luise Mendelssohn Hensel played the gardener.
(except the death of the day, that is to say, the day’s end), and God, the afterlife and religion are nowhere to be found. Also, unlike the other songs in the set of four he set by Shove which lacked clear tonal centers or were harmonically unstable, the harmonic motion in “The Water Mill” is comparatively clear.

In 1925 Vaughan Williams chose to set three song texts from three of Shakespeare’s plays. This particular author was a poet and playwright the composer knew well. At this point in his career Vaughan Williams had already set a variety of Shakespeare’s texts, both from the Sonnets and the plays, but their association goes back even further. Shakespeare was one of the authors whose work had been read aloud to Vaughan Williams as a child.\footnote{Ursula Vaughan Williams, \textit{R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams}, 20.} This collection represents the only time the composer set words by this oft-plundered author as art songs. The collection also represents the only time Vaughan Williams set texts from \textit{Measure for Measure}, \textit{Love’s Labour’s Lost}, and \textit{Henry VIII}. He had already and would continue to set texts from other plays (\textit{Othello}, \textit{Twelfth Night}, \textit{The Merry Wives of Windsor}, \textit{King Richard II}, \textit{Henry IV}, \textit{Richard III}, \textit{Henry V}, \textit{The Tempest}, \textit{Cymbeline}, \textit{As You Like It}, \textit{The Merchant of Venice}, and \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream}), often more than once

The composer’s decision to use texts from Shakespeare for his song writing is another example of his continued attraction to the conception of Englishness or English national identity, albeit taking it in a new direction. As was pointed out in the first chapter, this manifests as settings of English literature, and particularly setting those authors that engender intense reactions, or setting
subject matter from history or legend, and Shakespeare certainly qualifies. In one fell swoop, Vaughan Williams managed to incorporate all of these elements. Shakespeare, as an author, continued to ignite interest during Vaughan Williams’s lifetime. In particular, his setting of “When Icicles Hand by a Wall” from Three Songs from Shakespeare (text from the play Love’s Labour’s Lost) exhibits country characters involved in country activities.

In “When Icicles Hang by the Wall,” the King of Navarre vows to retire from the world in general, and women specifically, in order to study for three years. His plans are thwarted, however, by the arrival of the Princess of France and her Ladies. As in Tennyson’s 1847 narrative poem Princess Ida, the King and his men vie to win the hearts of the Princess and her Ladies, only to be thwarted in this as well, for the King of France dies, necessitating a period of mourning for the Princess and her courtiers. The Princess is informed of her father’s death toward the end of a theatrical entertainment put on for her by the order of the Prince. Both the play, and the play within the play (i.e., the theatrical entertainment), ends with the actors asking for the proper completion of the play (within the play) by singing the last song. Vaughan Williams chose to set the latter section of the song that appeared at the end of Love’s Labour’s Lost, specifically the section denoted as “Winter.” The composer never discussed why he only set “Winter;” however, it is obvious why this text would have appealed to

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575 See Lewis Foreman, “National Musical Character: Intrinsic or Acquired?” 75.

576 The plot of this play is similar to that of Tennyson’s poem Princess Ida, except that the roles are switched and the outcome is rather different. However, in Princess Ida, it is the Princess and her Ladies that decide to retire from the world (especially men) and study.
him. Aside from the fact that it appears in the work of one of the composer’s favorite authors, it, like “The Water Mill,” also bespeaks of country village life. Dick, the shepherd, is warming his hands, Tom is bringing logs into the hall, the parson is speaking, it is so cold that Marian has a raw, red nose, and all the while “greasy Joan” is cooling the contents of a pot. The text also reflects on the reality of rural life, in a similar manner to the way in which William Barnes’s texts did. The use of given names also makes the entire scenario much more personal, and therefore, audiences can be easily drawn into the story because they feel as if they know the characters. Vaughan Williams’s jaunty, chordal, accompaniment, is (vaguely) rather similar in style to that of “Blackmwore by the Stour”.

The countryside continued to be idealized in English culture between the wars—sometimes even more so because of the horrors experienced during the Great War. Alain Frogley explains that:

> the ruralist ideas of the pre-war years had taken on tremendous emblematic importance in the trenches, even for the urban working classes, and they became enshrined in the national self-image during the post-war period, given additional support through the new mass media of radio and cinema. In music, as in poetry, pastoralism and the influence of folk models were at their height.  

As mentioned above, Vaughan Williams’s inter-war songs that continue to celebrate rural England via the description of rural activities or their discussion of place are “The Water Mill” from *Four Poems by Fredegond Shove* (1925) and “When Icicles Hang by the Wall” from *Three Songs from Shakespeare* (1925).

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Despite his continuing attraction to expressing Englishness and the prevailing veneration of the countryside, the crisis the composer experienced during the Great War informed the type of texts he chose to set outside of song, at least in some cases. God, religion, and spirituality appear in the 1919-1934 texts he set to music, despite the composer’s general non-religious stance. This third period of composition (1919-1934) was one that included a succession of religious-based choral works: *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* (1921), the motet *Lord, Thou Hast Been Our Refuge* (1921), *Mass in G Minor* (1920-21), *Sancta civitas* (1923-5), *Te Deum in G* (1928), *Benedicite* (1929), *The Hundredth Psalm* (for mixed chorus, 1929), *Three Choral Hymns* (Easter Hymn, Christmas Hymn, and Whitsunday Hymn) (1929), and *Magnificat* (1932). It is also the period of time in which he wrote several hymns and revised *The English Hymnal* (1933).

“Motion and Stillness,” “Four Nights,” and “The New Ghost” from *Four Poems by Fredegond Shove* (1925) fall within the category of Songs of Crisis. The religious nature of two of these poems (“Four Nights” and “The New Ghost”), the subject of death (“Motion and Stillness” and “Four Nights” and “The New Ghost”), the use of ostinato and the lack of tonal center (“Motion and Stillness” and “Four Nights”), the general harmonic instability of the accompaniment (“The New Ghost”) all mark these songs as part of the composer’s changing style of composition. Vaughan Williams had dealt with the

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subject of death before in “Is my team ploughing?” from *On Wenlock Edge*, but not as a part of a personal contemplation.

_Three Poems by Walt Whitman_, another set of songs from 1925, dealt almost exclusively with the subject of death and what death means. This was not the first time he had turned to the poetry of Walt Whitman. He first set the American poet in 1904 in _Two Vocal Duets_, which includes “The Last Invocation,” poem sixteen from *Whispers of Heavenly Death*, and “The Love-song of the Birds,” which is a selection (lines 32-40) from the poet’s cluster _Sea Drift_. In 1907 the composer again set text by Whitman. This time he returned to *Whispers of Heavenly Death* in his song for chorus and orchestra, _Toward the Unknown Region_. In 1908 he used selections from Whitman’s _Drum Taps_ in _Three Nocturnes_ for baritone solo, semi-chorus, and orchestra. Despite the fact that the _Three Nocturnes_ remains unpublished, they are quite important: they exhibit Vaughan Williams’s increasing and unwavering interest in the American poet, and (according to Michael Kennedy) are among the most important of all Vaughan Williams’s unpublished manuscripts up to 1914 because they contain ideas that made it into later, published works.\(^{579}\) Kennedy explains:

> The growing mastery which Whitman’s verse precipitated is apparent. _Nocturne III_ is of special significance, as it contains ideas which came to full flower in other works, notably _The Pilgrim’s Progress, On Wenlock Edge, the Pastoral Symphony, Hugh the Drover_ and, most interesting of all, _Sancta Civitas_.\(^{580}\)

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Kennedy further suggests that the *Three Nocturnes* reveal a common “psychological link” between Whitman and Vaughan Williams, specifically the ocean, which for both becomes the symbol for the “exploration by the human soul of realms unknown to temporal man.”

From 1903 through 1909 Vaughan Williams was preoccupied with yet another Whitman setting, *A Sea Symphony*, for chorus and orchestra. Here Vaughan Williams explores a variety of poems by Whitman. In the first movement (entitled “A Song for All Seas, All Ships”) the composer sets the first seven lines from “Song of the Exposition” and the remainder from “Song for All Seas.” In the second he uses Whitman’s “On the beach at night, alone” and titles his movement the same. In the third movement, titled *Scherzo* (“The Waves”), he sets “After the Sea-Ship” from *Two Rivulets* by Whitman. In the fourth movement (“The Explorers”), he sets excerpts from *Passage to India* by E. M. Forster.

In 1925 the composer chose to set “Whispers of Heavenly Death” (1868) as “Nocturne,” the first song of the Whitman set. The poem is the second from Whitman’s cluster of the same title (1871). The cluster as a whole is a statement about death—a typical statement for Whitman, who often refers to death as a

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581 Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. 41-42. Additionally, Walter reminded us in “Vaughan Williams and the ‘Night Side of Nature’: Octatonicism in *Riders to the Sea*,” 55, that the sea is part of nature—part of what Vaughan Williams venerated. However, Walter Clark goes on to explain that the sea, particularly after World War I, becomes a metaphor for the darker side of nature in Vaughan Williams’s music. The sea—as part of nature, an extension of the countryside, if you will—is also an example of Englishness. (It is also a representation of England’s power and glory in war, historically.)
beginning rather than an ending. The very first line of the poem “Whispers of heavenly death murmur’d I hear,” sets the tone. This is a quiet poem; Whitman is not howling in the face of death. Rather, he sees death as divine and wonderful, gentle, and more of a beginning than an ending. “A Clear Midnight” is the last poem in the cluster From Noon to Starry Night (1881). The text bears certain similarities to “Whispers of Heavenly Death,” particularly within the realm of subject matter. Here Whitman once again describes death as a freeing experience from the myriad aspects involved in living, and a birth into an existence where one can emerge into “the themes though lovest best.” If “Whispers of Heavenly Death” is the whisper, or the hint, of the death approaching, and “A Clear Midnight” (as Vaughan Williams called it) the time immediately preceding death, then “Joy, Shipmate, Joy!” is death itself. This last poem is an expression of utter joy at death, once again casting death as a beginning rather than an ending, as a freeing agent rather than a cause for despair. This is a new expression of death for Vaughan Williams, one not seen in the songs texts prior to World War 1. For each of these poems, Vaughan Williams chooses an ostinato accompaniment, an accompaniment that is cyclical—it never ends, and always begins again, just as death is cast as a beginning in Whitman’s text. It is also a type of accompaniment that he had not used in song prior to the Great War, that watershed moment in his life.

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582 The cluster itself bears this out. One may also see, for example, Steven Olsen’s “‘Whispers of Heavenly Death’ (cluster) (1871)” in Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia, ed. J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), 775-5.
Lastly, in 1927 Vaughan Williams returns once again to the poetry of Alfred Edward Housman. He set eight poems of Housman’s: three from *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) and five from *Last Poems* (1922). The cycle *Along the Field* (1927) “loosely tells the story of a young man who wanders alone in the countryside, lost in his thoughts of his deceased beloved”. While the composer does, once again, explore the countryside and the wandering trope, and even uses the rhythmic fingerprint that has been traced in previous chapters (in the last song, “With Rue my Heart is Laden”), this cycle marks the composer’s first foray into art song setting that does not involve the piano at all. It is written for voice and violin. Additionally, this is the first time that Vaughan Williams relies on atonal techniques. In an unpublished paper, Jacob Sagrams has pointed out the composer’s use of the 016 trichord in the violin part of “The sigh the heaves the grasses.” Sagrams goes on to say, “‘The sigh that heaves the grasses’ stands out markedly in contrast to the more conventionally consonant songs that precede it in the cycle. Furthermore, the opening violin solo borders on serial”. England’s beloved folksong-collecting, *English Hymnal*-editing composer, using serial techniques?

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584 *Merciless Beauty* (1921), which is set for voice and string trio has the option of piano accompaniment. Vaughan Williams does not provide that option for *Along the Field*.

585 Jacob Sagrams, “Vaughan Williams’s Reflections of War: Detachment in *A Pastoral Symphony* and *Along the Field*.”
Vaughan Williams never publically discussed his service during the war, but it affected him greatly. He had one of the most disturbing, grisly and dangerous jobs while deployed in France. He was responsible for evacuating wounded soldiers from the front lines, a job that was messy, noisy, and incredibly gruesome. When he did return home, he was returning to a home that was devoid of many of his friends. Ursula Vaughan Williams explained the toll it took on the composer:

Return was not a simple and joyful release. He was going back to a world that lacked many of his friends, and in familiar surrounds their loss would be more vivid than in the separation of war. He was also going back to discover how his own invention had survived the years of suppression, wondering whether it could come to life again or whether it was lost for ever, and if so what he could do with his life.586

Vaughan Williams did keep composing, and he did write art songs once again. But his service and his experiences during the war changed him. The transformation in his art song composition was not total. There remains the idealization of rural England. But the art songs of the subsequent period are marked by the intrusion of new or changed themes: spirituality and death.

586 Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 132
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