

Oliver Chandler
Royal Holloway, University of London

**Edward Elgar's Chamber Music,
1918–1919:
Tonality, Form, and Aesthetics**

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*Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy*

Declaration of Authorship

I, Oliver Chandler, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own. Where I have relied on the work of others, this is clearly acknowledged.

Signed: *OChandler*

Date: 08/11/2019

Abstract

This thesis presents close readings of Edward Elgar's mature chamber works – the Violin Sonata, String Quartet, and Piano Quintet, Op. 82 to 84 – using a number of different analytical methods. These include Schenkerian, neo-Riemannian, and transformational theories of tonality; and Sonata-Theoretical and form-functional theories of form. I argue that, while the chamber works are composed of nineteenth-century musical materials, these traditional elements are often arranged in such a way that syntactic novelties arise. The original effects thus produced are discussed in relation to the aesthetic categories of early twentieth-century modernism and conservatism, which are characterised by musical processes of proliferation and integration, respectively. Analysis demonstrates that, although the latter process predominates, the interaction between both forces is often essential to the chamber music's meaning.

The thesis is tripartite in design:

Part I, composed of Chapter 1, interrogates Elgar's use of tonality in the first and final movements of the String Quartet, as well as in the Violin Sonata's Romance. While chromatic, octatonic, hexatonic, and modal forms of pitch organisation are sometimes used at fore-, middle-, and background levels, it is demonstrated that these materials are still all manifestly tonal. They can often be heard, I argue, to prolong a functional component in an overarching monotonicity.

Part II, composed of Chapter 2, considers Elgar's use of form in the chamber music. The quality of Elgar's relationship to the nineteenth-century *Formenlehre* tradition is established through a study of his engagement both with models of form featured in textbooks and with the idiosyncratic sonata-form designs of particular composers, particularly Schumann and Brahms. Two close readings are then provided of the first and final movements of Elgar's Violin Sonata. The former showcases Elgar's attitude to sonata form at its most conservative, while the latter manifests it at its most creative.

Part III, composed of Chapters 3 and 4, is more explicitly hermeneutic. In Chapter 3, I use one of Edward Burne-Jones's 'Bogey drawings' as a springboard for interpreting the middle movement of Elgar's String Quartet, in which classical tonality might be said to survive as an absent presence. In Chapter 4, I suggest that the Piano Quintet might be interpreted as dramatizing a tussle among modernist, liberal, and conservative theories of history.

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Gwenllian Lewis would no doubt be unimpressed by any effusion. I will limit myself to the following: she opened my ears to the violin and to chamber music; I first heard Elgar's Violin Sonata on her suggestion; she is my best friend, without whom I could not have written this thesis.

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Introduction

Assessments of Elgar's mature chamber music – the Violin Sonata, String Quartet, and Piano Quintet, Op. 82 to 84 – tend to bifurcate. One cohort of critics, to whom I shall refer as Group A, perceives this music to be conservative, particularly in its use of tonality and form.¹ Commentators of this disposition tend not to ground their aesthetic judgements in aesthetic content: their accounts are often rhetorical, rather than analytical and specific. At its most positive, this branch of criticism considers these works to have 'autumnal depth'² – that is, Elgar displays an awareness of the historical belatedness of the Austro-German tonal idiom in which he was writing; his music is reserved rather than brashly confident³ – but ultimately to fall short of the inspired standards of Elgar's middle period.⁴ At its most negative, Elgar's retention of a nineteenth-century aesthetic is thought to be symptomatic of his failure to come to

¹ See, for example, Thomas F. Dunhill, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London and Glasgow: Blackie and Son Limited, 1938), pp. 175–181; Diana McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1955), pp. 179–180; Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1968), p. 235; Michael Hurd, *Elgar* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 48; Ian Parrott, *Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1971), p. 79; Ian Parrott, 'Elgar's Harmonic Language' in *Elgar Studies*, ed. Raymond Monk (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), pp. 35–45, at p. 35; Robert Anderson, *Edward Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1993), p. 138; David Nice, *Edward Elgar: An Essential Guide to His Life and Works* (Llantrisant: Pavilion Books Ltd., 1996), p. 78; Julian Milford, liner note to *Elgar: Sospiri: Music for Violin and Piano*, Linda Mordkovitch and Julian Milford, CD, Chandos Records Ltd., CHAN9624, ©1998, p. 4; and Howard Smith, liner note to *Elgar: Piano Quintet and Violin Sonata*, Nash Ensemble, CD, Hyperion, CDH55301, ©2007, p. 2.

² Gone are the 'purple-and-sepia sunset[s] suddenly revealing patches of purest cerulean or fading apple-green' which were disclosed to J. B. Priestley in the orchestration of the symphonies (*The Edwardians* (London: Penguin Books, 2000 [1970]), p. 138); summer brightness gives way to 'autumnal' browns. 'Autumn' is a common trope in commentaries on these works. See, for example, A. J. Sheldon, *Edward Elgar* (London: London Office of 'Musical Opinion', 1932), pp. 54–55; Kennedy, *Portrait*, p. 235; Harold C. Schonberg, 'Music View: Reflective Late Works of Edward Elgar', *New York Times*, 18 December 1977, p. 113; and Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999 [1984]), p. 721.

³ For an extended study of historical belatedness in relation to music, see Margaret Notley's *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). It should be noted, however, that only one commentator uses the specific label 'late style' in relation to Elgar's chamber works: see Andrew Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style' (Ph.D. dissertation, The Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1995). Perhaps this is because it is a diffuse concept, which foregrounds musical 'difficulty' and 'fragmentation' – concepts that do not always chime particularly well with the chamber music – just as much as 'introspection' and 'retrospection': see Joseph N. Straus's tabular distillation of six (often contradictory) metaphorical clusters of late-style characteristics in his 'Disability and "Late Style" in Music', *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 25, Issue 1 (2008): 3–45, at 12. Furthermore, although Elgar was in his third and final phase of creativity, and his idiom had become old-fashioned, he did not compose the chamber works under the star of looming mortality, or the subjectivity-altering influence of a disability. I avoid the term for these reasons.

⁴ Kennedy's *Portrait* exemplifies this view: see p. 235.

terms with the new musical developments of the early twentieth century, as well as with the devastation wrought by the First World War.⁵ This view is exemplified by David Pownall's 1993 play, *Elgar's Rondo*, in which Elgar's publisher and friend Augustus Jaeger comes back from the dead in 1919 to berate the composer for not writing a war symphony:

JAEGER: The Battle of the Somme cried out for a great symphony. Now the Marne does the same. [...] When they die in such thousands don't you feel it in the air? Have you never been moved by their plight? [*Elgar turns his head away*] Then you have failed! [...]

ELGAR: Yes... but things are changing... I haven't given up entirely... I've written a string quartet, would you believe?

JAEGER: A string quartet. One? Only one?

ELGAR: A piano quintet... a violin sonata... not at all bad.

JAEGER: My, this is corn in Egypt!⁶

The other set of critics, by contrast, to whom I shall refer as Group B, adopts interpretative stances which are altogether more nuanced. It is these points of view on which this thesis seeks to build. Despite their internal differences, commentators of this kind collectively suggest that the chamber works are only superficially conservative: strewn with subtle novelties, they are in fact forward-looking in their approach. Indeed, as Andrew Colton puts it, 'in applying traditional modes of analysis [to them], the original and ultimately essential qualities of the music are missed'.⁷ Attempts to parse these works as if they were straightforwardly nineteenth-century in both character and technique result, at best, in distortion and, at worst, in failure; adapted music-theoretical perspectives are required to make sense of their sometimes innovative

⁵ See, for example, Robert Anderson, 'Review: Violin Sonata by Elgar, Yehudi Menuhin and Hephzibah Menuhin; Violin Sonata by Vaughan Williams, Yehudi Menuhin and Hephzibah Menuhin', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 121, No. 1652 (Oct. 1980), 634; Moore, *Edward Elgar*, p. 738; Edward Greenfield, 'Review: Piano Quintet by Elgar; Legend for Viola and Piano by Bax, Cassini, Forbes and Aeolian Quartet', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 105, No. 1452 (Feb. 1964), 127; and H. C. Colles, 'The Music of Yesterday and Today', *The Times*, 24 May 1919, cited in Moore, *Edward Elgar*, p. 740.

⁶ David Pownall, 'Elgar's Rondo' in *The Composer Plays* (London: Oberon Books, 1994), pp. 107–160, at pp. 151–152.

⁷ Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style', p. 150.

materials. However, the meanings of such compositional novelties are often valenced in diametrically opposed ways, which necessitates the creation of two subgroups.⁸

Those critics to whom I refer as Group B.1 suggest that modern idiosyncrasies merely spice a traditional base which remains otherwise unchanged:⁹ in Arnold Whittall's memorable phrase, the chamber works embrace discontinuity only as 'a means of diversifying a [monotonal, formal] unity'.¹⁰ For this reason, they perceive Elgar's chamber music to be novelly conservative, rather than clandestinely modernist. To borrow once more from Whittall, it is thought that 'conservatism in art is actually more about finding novelty and adventure within "the old ways" than about the most literal retention of those ways'.¹¹ However, the twists and turns of these adventures – even if they do inevitably lead back home, most likely to some form of tonic – are not discussed in any technical detail, even if the comments of the relevant critics sometimes appear to be decidedly formalist in tone.

By contrast, those critics to whom I refer as Group B.2 maintain that these demure revolutions form the *raison d'être* of the compositions in question:¹² that which is still blandly traditional is there simply to hold the movement's modernist energy in check; to stop it entirely breaking free.¹³ Indeed, these works can be said to exhibit that

⁸ While Group A also features internal differences of interpretation, these are not necessarily mutually exclusive: Jerrold Northop Moore, for example, is included in both footnotes 2 and 5. For this reason, I have not attempted to differentiate them so precisely (e.g. A.1, A.2).

⁹ The clearest expressions of this view can be found in E.B., 'Elgar's Chamber Music: His Only String Quartet', *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 November 1928, p. 14; the reviews of the Violin Sonata in *The Arts Gazette*, 29 March 1919 (cited in Daniel M. Grimley, "'A smiling with a sigh": the chamber music and works for strings' in *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, eds. Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], pp. 120–138, at p. 133) and *The Scotsman* (Author's name unknown, 'Elgar Celebration Concert', *The Scotsman*, Monday 5 December 1932, p. 10); and Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style'. As will be demonstrated in the following reception history, a number of reviews written contemporaneously with the premieres of Elgar's chamber works were to describe them in similar terms.

¹⁰ Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹² See Grimley, 'The chamber music and works for strings' and J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 23.

¹³ A similar idea is applied with great lucidity by Benjamin M. Korstvedt in relation to Schubert's late music: 'The part does not thereby become independent of the whole; on the contrary, in a sense the whole serves the part more strongly than vice versa. This may be one of Schubert's great formal innovations: the creation of large-scale forms in which it is possible to feel that the bulk of a movement exists for the sake of certain splendidly distinctive prolonged moments, not for the sake of the whole'. See his "'The prerogative of late style": thoughts on the expressive world of the late works' in *Schubert's Late Music: History, Theory, Style*, eds. Lorraine Byrne Bodley and Julian Horton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 404–425, at p. 424. Though Schubert's music is almost a century older than Elgar's chamber works, Korstvedt still reads the effect of this part-whole relationship as being particularly

which J. P. E. Harper-Scott has defined elsewhere as a form of ‘reactive modernism’: i.e. they accommodate modernist proliferation and/or disintegration, but retain more traditional features too.¹⁴ Elgar’s treatment of this balancing act is worthy of comment. On the one hand, it is essential to note that there is little in the material content of the chamber works that is not straightforwardly nineteenth-century in origin; traditional tonal gestures constitute the backbone of Elgar’s music, rather than functioning as that which Arnold Schoenberg dubbed ‘a Christian-German mantle’ which composers sometimes donned in order ‘to cloak their secret, sinful converse with dissonances’.¹⁵ On the other hand, even when the inoculative dose of modernism is at its weakest, the resultant process of assimilation fundamentally changes the quality of that which is being conserved, to the extent to which ‘what is’ and ‘what was’ are necessarily different. T. S. Eliot summarises this process with great lucidity:

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new.¹⁶

To put it another way, Elgar’s subtly distorted emulations of classical or romantic musical languages often produce odd turns of phrase, structured by novel syntaxes; but, even when he retains old forms, such as the sonata, these take on new meanings owing to the early twentieth-century contexts in which they are heard, as a result of the changing proportions and relations between old and new which Eliot describes. To put it another way, though still using nineteenth-century materials, both harmonic and

modern; it is conditioned by what is effectively the same mode of capitalist subjectivity that defines Elgar’s work (p. 412).

¹⁴ J. P. E. Harper-Scott, ‘Reactive Modernism’ in *The Routledge Research Companion to Modernism in Music*, eds. Björn Heile and Charles Wilson (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 155–174.

¹⁵ Arnold Schoenberg, ‘Opinion or Insight?’ (1926) in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein and trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 258–264, at p. 259.

¹⁶ T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1945 [1920]), italics in the original, pp. 49–50.

formal, the chamber music can be heard to speak with a peculiarly twentieth-century accent.

While commentators such as Daniel Grimley and Harper-Scott have theorised rigorously the link between modernism and music (in Elgar's middle-period output and in the work of Carl Nielsen, respectively), their judgements about the chamber music remain fundamentally allusive and intuitive, even though their perspectives are almost certainly influenced by their in-depth analyses of other closely related pieces.¹⁷ The precise technical underpinnings of the chamber music's reactive modernism thus remain to be taxonomised. One might, of course, abstract from the arguments of various authors about the relative modernity or modernism of Elgar's music, and apply them directly to the chamber music. As I explain later on, however, 'modernist' or 'modern' features, picked out by these scholars in Elgar's middle-period practice (i.e. his handling of large-scale form; the disruptive effects produced by thematic reminiscence; or the potentially 'negative' meanings of his tonal arguments),¹⁸ are often handled slightly differently in the chamber music, which makes it difficult to read across from works of the middle period to those of the later.

It is not the intention of this thesis to decide whether Elgar was a novel conservative or a reactive modernist. What is important is that Group B critics perceive this music to be genuinely new in some way. I seek to expand on this basic premise in the coming four chapters, and to invest it with greater analytical precision. Furthermore, as I will argue in the remainder of this introduction, any differences of interpretation, which are subsumed within this general critical consensus, are more often attributable to the time in which the commentators in question were writing than to the music's pitch organisation. To this end, it will be helpful to provide a preliminary sketch of the reception history of the chamber works, which I will fill out and complicate as the introduction proceeds. Broadly speaking, it can be divided into four phases, each of which can be loosely correlated with one of the critical positions outlined above:

¹⁷ See Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010) and Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*.

¹⁸ See, for example, Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); James A. Hepokoski, 'Elgar' in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (Michigan: Schirmer Books, 1997), pp. 327–344; and Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*.

- Stage 1: 1919 to mid-1930s: the reception is mostly positive. Some critics stress the way in which Elgar has re-energised old forms and shown that traditional materials – triads, diatonic scales, etc. – can be manipulated to produce new musical effects. The chamber works are thought to be novelly conservative (Group B.1).¹⁹
- Stage 2: Mid-1930s to 1950s: the reception steadily becomes more negative. Generally speaking, Elgar’s music comes to be associated with Edwardian complacency: this applies to all his output, not just the chamber music.²⁰ Even those who advocate Elgar’s music, however, focus on the apparent technical deficiencies of the chamber works: they have their moments, but they are ultimately deemed to be *ersatz* Elgar (Group A).²¹
- Stage 3: 1960s to early 2000s: Elgar’s general output is re-evaluated; his legacy comes to be viewed more positively.²² However, while the fragmentations and introspective sadnesses that spice the middle-period music can be read as a subtle critique of the pomp and circumstances of the Edwardian era,²³ this point of view becomes untenable post-1914. Critical responses to the chamber music are now often more explicitly centred on Elgar’s failure to respond to the war in a more overtly modernist language (Group A).²⁴

¹⁹ See the reviews of the Violin Sonata in *The Arts Gazette*, 29 March 1919 and *The Scotsman*, 5 December 1932, for example. A full summary of the criticism received by these works around the time of their premieres in the London papers is given in Richard Westwood-Brookes, *Elgar and the Press: A life in newsprint* (self-published 2019), pp. 224–227.

²⁰ See, for example, Constant Lambert, *Music Ho!: A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Pelican, 1948), p. 205 and Cecil Gray, *Survey of Contemporary Music* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1924), pp. 92–3.

²¹ See, for example, Dunhill, *Sir Edward Elgar*, pp. 175–181 and McVeagh, *Edward Elgar*, pp. 176–180.

²² Three crucial events mark this revival: Ken Russell’s BBC film, *Elgar* (1962); Jacqueline du Pré’s recording of the Cello Concerto with John Barbirolli and the LSO (1965); and the publication of Kennedy’s *Portrait of Elgar* (1968).

²³ This basic argument, first put forward by Kennedy’s *Portrait of Elgar*, is greatly refined in Riley’s *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*. Michael Hurd offers a different reading of my Stage 3: he claims that, although the almost non-existent engagement with the chamber music after Elgar’s death was such that it ‘might never have been written’, they were ‘taken out again and found to be good’ from the late 1960s onwards. They certainly achieved more attention, but the majority of written estimation that survives is always somewhat reserved: these works have their merits, yes, but they are often considered to be outweighed by their flaws. Perhaps musicians did enjoy these works and merely did not commit their thoughts to paper. See Hurd, *Elgar*, p. 55.

²⁴ See, for example, Moore, *Edward Elgar*, p. 738; Greenfield, ‘Review’, p. 127; and Colles, ‘The Music of Yesterday and Today’. This criticism is amplified by the fact that the Cello Concerto, Op. 85, also composed in the 1918–1919 period, *was* thought to respond to the war in a negative and ascetic, perhaps even modernist, tone: see, in particular, Percy Young, *Elgar, O.M.: A Study of a Musician* (London: White Lion Publishers, 1973 [1955]), p. 340; Parrot, *Elgar*, p. 76; and Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar*, p. 237.

- Stage 4: Early 2000s to the present: new academic studies of Elgar seek again to re-evaluate the legacy of Elgar’s music, including his chamber works, this time in relation to modernism, which is expanded as a critical category. The apparent traditionalism of Elgar’s language, it is claimed, is a surface feature: his use of form often results in musical meanings which are more overtly negative and/or modernist (Group B.2).²⁵

It is interesting to note, in this respect, that the reception history of Elgar’s chamber music is broadly isomorphic with the reception of the Great War through the twentieth century. The latter has been rendered vividly by the historian David Reynolds.²⁶ A crucial aspect of his argument is that the 1914–1918 conflict came only latterly to be associated with an irredeemable darkness. Indeed, the initial impact of the war’s cessation, as well as the following two decades of its politico-economic aftermath, often strengthened (rather than weakened) Britain, both domestically and internationally. For example, the Empire ‘lurched to [its] zenith’ in 1919 on account of the seizure of colonial territories (formerly under German control) in Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific;²⁷ the British patriotism fostered by global conflict had resulted in the softening of Scotland’s and Wales’s demands for independence;²⁸ the government managed political threats from both the left and the right, brought about by the growth of working-class suffrage, more successfully than any other European nation, achieving a level of relative democratic stability;²⁹ and the British economy survived the financial crash of 1931 with relatively minor damage compared with its continental-European and trans-Atlantic brethren.³⁰ That ‘war was hell [...] was axiomatic [...] but Britain

²⁵ Many of the essays in J. P. E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (eds.), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) exemplify this trend.

²⁶ David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86. This ‘success’ was ultimately a failure in disguise. ‘London’s [colonial] champagne moment turned into a painful hangover’, but the true extent of British overstretch only became apparent after the Second World War (p. 93). As Reynolds has it, ‘Britain adapted surprisingly well to the winds of [colonial] change in the 1920s and 1930s’ (p. 104).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Obvious exceptions to this domestic trend were Ireland’s war of independence (1919–21) and its subsequent civil war (1922–23), which were more typical of continental Europe’s turbulent post-war experience of competing nationalisms: see *ibid.*, pp. 25–33.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 56–76.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 141–159.

had emerged victorious and few [in the years that followed] would go so far as to assert that the Great War had been pointless, if only out of respect for the dead and the bereaved. Ten years after the Armistice the concept of “sacrifice” remained compelling’.³¹

That which was responsible, above all else, for changing people’s attitudes towards the Great War was the subsequent 1939–1945 conflict, in light of which the former war became known (retrospectively) as the First World War. When George V opened the new Imperial War Museum on 9 June 1920, it was hoped that it ‘was to be a museum not just *of* war but *for* war. Putting war to death, turning it into history, would be the ultimate justification for 1914–1918’.³² However, many of the 450,000 visitors who had flocked to the museum between 1938 and the Spring of 1939 ‘had been seeking lessons from the last war about how to face a future conflict’.³³ By September, Britain was once again at war. What had its unprecedented sacrifices been for?³⁴

Despite all the horror that the Second World War would bring with it, it offered something to the British which had been absent from the First: namely, a clear sense of moral purpose in the form of the collective desire to challenge Nazi evil;³⁵ and a feeling that that which was being fought for were not only abstract values (‘saving civilisation’ or ‘making the world safe for democracy’) or the geo-political interests of a ruling elite, but the very survival of Britain itself.³⁶ At its conclusion, the feeling of qualitative difference between the two wars was further emphasised by factors including an outright victory (to be contrasted with a disappointing and unheroic armistice), the accumulation of less economic damage, and a far lower British death toll.³⁷ In this light, the shadow cast by the Great War on the twentieth century came to look even more monstrous.

³¹ Ibid., p. 207.

³² Ibid., italics in the original, p. 209.

³³ Ibid., p. 244.

³⁴ The expansion of the Japanese and American navies throughout the 1920s and 1930s (ibid., pp. 123–126), as well as growing terror at the prospect of German airstrikes in London from the mid-1930s on, indicated that another war was a distinct possibility. However, these factors catalysed the growth of an unprecedentedly large peace movement, not a mass cynicism regarding the legacy of the Great War: Britons clearly still believed it possible to learn from (and to avoid) the mistakes of the past. See ibid., pp. 209–244. This changed with the onset of World War II.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 282; 285–287.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 260–261.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 272; 280.

It reached its blackest point, Reynolds claims, when the ‘social reconstruction of the Great War around its fiftieth anniversary served to drive 1914–18 firmly into the trenches and into poetry’.³⁸ In particular, the ‘horrified candour’ of the soldier poets, emphasised in the 1960s anthologies that are still a staple of the school curriculum even today, proved to be highly influential.³⁹ Wilfred Owen’s gritty realism became a synecdoche in the popular imagination not only for the aesthetics of the Great War but also for the Great War itself. The work of the war poets was later paired with the modernist war-time art of figures such as C. R. W. Nevinson, Paul Nash, and Wyndham Lewis, after their popular rediscovery in the 1980s.⁴⁰ In consequence, the initially mixed reception of the Great War was forgotten; modernism and realism came together, in an ‘ironic symbiosis,’⁴¹ as the only languages in which one could speak war’s truth.⁴²

The parallels which exist between my brief sketch of the reception history of the chamber works and Reynolds’s of the Great War should now be clear. Immediate reactions to both phenomena were initially mixed and sometimes even essentially positive; it was only later that critical opinion became overwhelmingly negative and embarrassed, a process which reached its apogee in the 1960s. While it would be reductive to attribute the former trajectory directly to the latter – the tectonic plates of micro- and macro-history move at different speeds and depths – the similarity between them is too striking to be ignored. Indeed, criticisms of the chamber music which directly invoke the Great War, written by writers right across the twentieth century, serve to consolidate this link. Particularly instructive in this respect are the responses of two important musical figures from the early twentieth century, who had both seen active service in the army: namely, the music critic H. C. Colles and the composer

³⁸ Ibid., p. 317.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 347.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 351.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 352.

⁴² Jay Winter has made a similar argument about differences in cultural production pre- and post-1945: ‘an eclectic set of classical, romantic, or religious images and ideas’ maintained their artistic currency during the interwar period, even despite the development of new, modernist techniques. This was because of ‘their [unique] power to mediate bereavement’: they shored up the symbolic order, which the war had threatened to disintegrate, enabling people to represent (and thus to come to terms with) that which they had lost. However, after the almost unimaginable atrocities of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, Winter suggests that the search for meaning in (or even outside of) ‘the symbolic language of romantic, classical, and religious reference [...] became infinitely more difficult’. See his *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1995]), pp. 5; 228.

Arthur Bliss. As we shall see, while their judgements dissonate with the majority of written commentary produced by their contemporaries, they adumbrate much of the later criticism from the 1960s up to the early 2000s. In consequence, they are useful points around which to orientate a reception history as, between them, they exemplify two of the principal critical arguments that define Group A's perspective on the chamber music: 1) it is too conservative and/or 2) it lacks the depth and complexity of Elgar's middle-period symphonism. I discuss the first of these points in relation to the comments of the former of these two critics, and the second in terms of the latter.

0.1 Reception History

In May 1919, Colles, who praises without reservation Elgar's chamber works in an article written only two months later for *The Musical Times*,⁴³ bemoaned their apparent lack of virility in *The Times*:

They give one a new sympathy with the modern revolt against beauty of line and colour. A stab of crude ugliness would be a relief from that overwhelming sense of beauty... It is not really ugliness, and still less vulgarity, that one craves as an antidote to the Elgarian kind of beauty. It is the contrast of a more virile mind... What has he to say now, and have the years stamped their meaning on him in any profound way? It was the failure to find this through the greater part of the new works which made one impatient before the end of Wednesday's performance.⁴⁴

Colles, in his appeal to ugliness, was arguably inspired by his time as a captain in the army. The isomorphism that exists between experiences of war-time conflict and modernist aesthetics has been theorised extensively by a number of writers.⁴⁵ Indeed, it

⁴³ Colles here characterises this corpus as 'one of the finest and most attractive examples of modern chamber music': this at a time when chamber music was Britain's most prolific genre, due both to the composition competitions sponsored by philanthropists such as W. W. Cobbett, and the great cost of orchestra rehearsals after the war, which meant that orchestral programmes were still 'chiefly composed of familiar works' that would not take too much time to pull together. See 'Elgar's String Quartet', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 60, No. 917 (July 1919), pp. 336–338 at pp. 338; 336.

⁴⁴ Colles, 'The Music of Yesterday and Today'.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1990); Allyson Booth, *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space between Modernism and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); and Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

has now become a commonplace of histories of the cultural imagination to suggest that, in Peter Howarth's words, 'many of the splintered, haunted and traumatised "perceptual habits" of the First World War soldier' had become the very form of the 'modernist work of art'.⁴⁶ The overall integration of tonal and formal elements achieved by Elgar in the chamber works, by contrast, might make them appear insensitive to the fragmentation that the war had brought to the lives of so many, including Colles. That said, he still went on to suggest in his review that hints of a new style were 'not altogether absent', citing the first movement of the Piano Quintet as an example of a new direction in Elgar's music. After all, the move towards an aesthetic which valued fragmentation just as much as (if not more than) integration was to be gradual, as Reynolds's account attests. Jeremy Dibble stresses a similar point:

The end of the First World War, which coincided with the death of Parry, signalled a sea-change in British musical reception. A rejection of the country's Victorian and Edwardian musical legacy did not immediately lead to the neglect of Elgar's music (as it did of Parry's, Stanford's and Mackenzie's), but Elgar himself was undoubtedly aware that public attention had shifted elsewhere.⁴⁷

The four phases of the chamber music's reception, outlined above, well represent this journey of changing fortunes. As already intimated, the majority of reviewers between 1919 and the early 1930s, who constitute Stage 1 of my reception history, did not mention the war at all: they were more interested in technical or aesthetic issues. There was, at this point, no widely perceived moral imperative to respond to the war in any particular way, or even to respond to it at all.

One of the most famous supporters of the chamber music was Elgar's friend, the music critic Ernest Newman. He was surprised by the Violin Sonata's 'deliberately rarefied [...] tissue', which was unprecedented for the composer.⁴⁸ It was as if Elgar

⁴⁶ Peter Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 183.

⁴⁷ Jeremy Dibble, 'Elgar and his British contemporaries' in *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, eds. Daniel M. Grimley & Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 15–23, at p. 22. That interest in Elgar was diminishing is suggested both by the dearth of reviews in London papers after the 1919 premieres of the chamber works, as well as the relatively low attendance numbers, decried by critics in *The Musical Times*, *The Arts Gazette*, *The Observer*, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, and *The Sunday Times*, at the concerts in question. See Westwood-Brookes, *Elgar and the Press*, pp. 224–225; 227.

⁴⁸ Cited in Moore, *Edward Elgar*, p. 739.

were attempting to close the gap between ‘inner core and outer expression, the essential and the excessive’, to borrow Howarth’s description of the aesthetic principles being trialled contemporaneously by Georgians and modernists alike in their repudiations of the artificiality of Victorian poetry.⁴⁹ As Percy Young was later to observe, ‘the overall tautness of effect and economy [in the chamber works], amounting almost to austerity, was—and is—startling’.⁵⁰ Perhaps the best exemplification of this is the opening to the Piano Quintet (see Example 0.1), in which the myriad octave doublings and the inversion of the usual roles of melody and accompaniment for the quartet and the piano result in a particularly austere sound world.⁵¹

Moderato ♩ = 76

Moderato ♩ = 76

Example 0.1: Piano Quintet, Op. 84, 1st movement, rehearsal figures 0:1–10

⁴⁹ Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Young, *Elgar, O.M.*, p. 345.

⁵¹ This passage is analysed at length in Chapter 4, Section 4.1.

Most critics, though, concerned themselves principally with form and harmony, rather than with timbre. Many of their comments are frustratingly vague. Even though they frequently invoke musical concepts, this is often done merely rhetorically rather than technically. It is the aim of the following chapters to find technical corollaries for the descriptive flourishes that characterise the aesthetic positions of the Group B.1 writers.

The music critic of the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, discusses the mismatch between placidity and drama on the surface of the Violin Sonata in terms of a novel organic adaptability, to be distinguished from the quasi-modernist antagonism which Daniel M. Grimley attributes to the same work almost eighty years later.⁵²

The joy of this music lies in its acceptance of restrictions and its doing the utmost inside them without the least strain. Everything keeps wonderfully to the values of pure design, and, though moments of poignancy and dramatic life ruffle the music's placid surface here and there, they are so subtly toned that they never overflow the justly calculated measure of the composer's form.⁵³

L. Dutton Green's review of Elgar's Violin Sonata stressed that it 'seems like a protest against the far-fetched devices of the ultra-moderns—it seems to say: See what can be done yet with the old forms, the old methods of composing, the old scales: if you only know how to do it your work may yet be new, yet original, yet beautiful'.⁵⁴ What exactly is new about them, however, he fails to say. The music critic of *The Scotsman* expressed a similar opinion, albeit that he highlights only the originality of the music's form:

These three works are not only among the most lovable music composed in this century, they display how capable the sonata form is of saying new things at the bidding of a composer who has something new to say. In the string quartet which opened tonight's programme, Elgar had no need of bizarre harmony. He was thinker enough at the age of 60, and stylist enough to say new things in the old familiar harmonies.⁵⁵

⁵² Grimley, 'The chamber music and works for strings', p. 133.

⁵³ E.B., 'Elgar's Chamber Music: His Only String Quartet', p. 14.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Grimley, 'The chamber music and works for strings', p. 133.

⁵⁵ Author's name unknown, *The Scotsman*, p. 10.

Again, the content communicated in sonata form's new utterances is left both undefined and unspecified. Writing of the prospect of hearing two of Elgar's new chamber works – the Quartet and the Quintet – at the Wigmore Hall on 21 May 1919, *The Times's* music critic commented that their sense of anticipation was 'perhaps a little damped down when the sonata for violin and piano made its appearance a few weeks ago and proved to be neither startlingly new nor of the kind which goes straight to the heart of the ordinary listener'.⁵⁶ Even despite this, they recognised that 'still there is something elusive about it which might be taken to herald bigger things': a suspicion that was vindicated, in their view, by the Piano Quintet, which was 'impelled by a stronger force and an energy more muscular and less nervous than that of the Elgar we have known'.⁵⁷ At their most traditional, the chamber works' exact relationship to the past remained elusive; at their best, they represented, so the reviewer thought, a genuine progression in Elgar's compositional career.

'A refining of material and method' also defined the Piano Quintet and the String Quartet according to *The Manchester Guardian's* music critic, with Elgar rightfully choosing to resist the temptation to 'go one better' than Stravinsky's own Quartet, as some people had been expecting. This would have resulted, the critic claimed, in a lacklustre imitation.⁵⁸ It was more appropriate for Elgar to continue composing in an authentically Elgarian way than to emulate the style of a modernist composer.

Even while expressing reservation, the *Daily Mail's* R.C. similarly acknowledged the presence of a certain 'newness' in the Piano Quintet, and noted its probable appeal to audiences:

But though somewhat more modern than they [Dvorak's and Brahms's Piano Quintets], who can imagine it [Elgar's Piano Quintet] to have existed without them? It adds refinements to the one and richness to the other, and yet it ends by cloying. [...] There is in so much textual richness hardly anything pungent. In the Finale one positively craved some stridency from the strings, which never came, or some novel sonority from the piano (Sir Edward's piano-writing is

⁵⁶ Cited in Westwood-Brookes, *Elgar and the Press*, p. 225.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Author unknown, 'Elgar's New Chamber Music', *The Manchester Guardian*, May 22 1919, p. 12.

above all conventional—he has no doubt scorned to learn from Liszt). Yet the work will assuredly give just pleasure to many audiences and would, too, to great numbers of players if it were not so difficult.⁵⁹

Even when a small number of contemporary critics stressed the chamber music's apparent lack of innovation, this was often not intended pejoratively, as would later be the case. S.L., a music critic from *The Manchester Guardian*, considered that the Violin Sonata was of 'historic importance in English music, and, though it shows the composer in no new light, shows him quite at his best'.⁶⁰ Writing in the same paper eleven years later, J.E.D.D. averred that, in the chamber music, 'Elgar turns his strength inwards so to say; muses upon all he has lived through. [...] But he has now attained philosophy'.⁶¹ To put it another way, old materials are used, albeit with a new depth of understanding. In his discussion of the Violin Sonata, the music critic of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* similarly commented that Elgar 'has put forward [...] nothing revolutionary either in form or in the essential stuff of music. [...] Yet he seems content in this, as in his other new productions, to rely upon a manner and style which he has ripened to a rich fruition, and which seems sufficient for the expression of his ideas'.⁶² The reviewer of *The Times* interpreted the same work's apparent lack of both seriousness and technical virtuosity almost as a sign of admirable gentlemanliness:

Elgar's sonata contains much that we have heard before in other forms, but as we do not at all want him to change and be somebody else, that is as it should be. His music is not like a speech or a lecture, but has the give and take of conversation; it is built up of suggestions, probable arguments, impossible theses, kindness, fun. Nothing very striking is said that you can jot down in a notebook for future use, but things, in themselves, trivial, are made to yield a meaning by their context; and if they were taken out of it—as one might take a solitary, rather plaintive bar which comes again and again in the slow movement—they would mean nothing. It is all serious of purpose and irresponsible by temperament: all sorts of tags lie about

⁵⁹ R.C., 'Elgar's Chamber Music' in *Daily Mail*, 22 May 1919, p. 8.

⁶⁰ S.L., 'Elgar's Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte', *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 April 1919, p. 12.

⁶¹ J.E.D.D., 'A Chamber Concert: The Elgar Piano Quintet', *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 January 1930, p. 16.

⁶² Author Unknown, 'Elgar's Violin Sonata', *Sheffield Daily Press*, Saturday 20 December 1919, p. 9.

negligently as if they might be tidied up whenever there was leisure, and yet when the thing is over its drift has been quite clear.⁶³

By 1934, Everard Jose was still able to speak about both the war and the chamber music without being embarrassed by his acknowledgement of their near simultaneous historical unfolding. He wrote that, ‘after the war, in a changed and shaken world, we find Elgar at the summit of his technical powers, but with a reflective, backward outlook. In this evening light came the last group of outstanding works, consisting of the chamber music and the Violoncello concerto’.⁶⁴ Despite looking backwards rather than forwards, Elgar’s works are still considered to be ‘outstanding’; there is little suggestion of a perceived moral imperative to respond to the war only in modernist, or gritty, realist terms.⁶⁵ In his posthumously published 1932 book, A. J. Sheldon similarly opined that ‘war may stir us for a time and carry us along in its train, but after action there may follow reaction. It may be that Elgar, entering upon the autumn of life and having sounded the trumpet-call to battle and sung the dirge to the slain, could hardly have done otherwise than yield to the soft and insistent call of sheer beauty. It is Nature’s way’.⁶⁶ In other words, Elgar might be thought to have grappled honourably with the war in pieces such as *Carillon* (1914) and *Polonia* (1915) and so, when the conflict neared its end, and when victory seemed assured, he was right to turn inward and to make his own ageing process and personal experience the substance of his new music.⁶⁷ For both Jose and Sheldon, one feels that ‘beauty’ might still be considered, over a decade on, to be a viable antidote to the horror and pain wrought by the Great War.

Stage 2 of my reception history, which focuses on the period between the mid 1930s and the 1950s, also witnesses few direct mentions of the chamber music’s

⁶³ Author Unknown, ‘Sir E. Elgar’s Violin Sonata’, *The Times*, Saturday May 22 1919, p. 9.

⁶⁴ Everard Jose, *The Significance of Elgar* (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1934), p. 26.

⁶⁵ Paul Fussell, for example, has documented the ways in which some soldier poets continued to use the pastoral as a means of mediating their war experiences, in a process that provided them with aesthetic satisfaction and comfort, at the same time as mounting an assault on the war by invoking its very opposite: for poets like Edward Blunden, he claims, attention on pre-industrial England in both landscape and language is ‘the only repository of criteria for measuring fully the otherwise unspeakable grossness of the war’. See his *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 268.

⁶⁶ Sheldon, *Edward Elgar*, p. 54.

⁶⁷ The former work is a recitation with orchestral accompaniment, written in condemnation of Germany’s violation of Belgian neutrality; the latter is a symphonic prelude, composed in support of the people of Poland, caught in the crossfire between German and Russian military forces.

relationship to war. The tone of the criticism, however, is less positive; critics often honed in on the music's apparent technical deficiencies. The most scathing treatment of these works came from a fellow composer, Thomas F. Dunhill, in 1938. He declared that, 'as the product of the greatest English composer of modern times these three compositions are, frankly, a disappointment. [...] They are scarcely destined to take a permanent place in the chamber music repertory, nor is Elgar's position as a composer of such music likely to be recognised outside the circle of his immediate friendly admirers'.⁶⁸ (W. H. Reed's effusive commentary on these works is dismissed on exactly these grounds.⁶⁹) That which most provoked Dunhill's ire was that

Elgar had taken upon himself a manner which was, for him, excessively restrained, without perhaps supplying the intellectual interest which might have gained some compensation. All three works were, to put it bluntly, rather more old-fashioned and less enterprising in tone (especially in a harmonic sense) than the previous music had led one to expect.⁷⁰

Diana McVeagh was to hold a similar view in her first book on Elgar, written in 1955. In the chamber works, she claims, 'Elgar was no longer questing, no longer driven by unfulfilled ideas, but was creating out of a mind that had been fully stretched and was now satisfied, and therefore not working under such high pressure'. Indeed, his new music is considered to be 'conservative, especially harmonically'.⁷¹

This thesis intends thoroughly to debunk any such claim, although it is easy enough to infer on what basis it might be made. Take, for example, the following

⁶⁸ Dunhill, *Sir Edward Elgar*, p. 181.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 180–181. The relevant passage from W. H. Reed is his entry 'Elgar' in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Vol. I, A–H (London: Oxford University Press, 1963 [1929]), pp. 372–377.

⁷⁰ Dunhill, *Sir Edward Elgar*, pp. 175–176. Even authors who have a soft spot for the chamber works sometimes share this view. See, for example, Robert Anderson, 'Review: Violin Sonata; String Quartet by Elgar, Bean, Parkhouse and Music Group of London Quartet', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 113, No. 1549 (Mar. 1972), p. 273.

⁷¹ McVeagh, *Edward Elgar*, p. 180. She reiterated this point of view almost fifty years later: 'As a group, the three chamber works are conservative, both for their own date, and if compared with Elgar's earlier big works. Possibly, recognising in himself a reluctance to absorb recent idioms, he turned his affections to the music he had played during his youth [i.e. Brahms and salon music]'. See her entry 'Elgar, Sir Edward' in *The New Grove* (2001), retrieved 23 Apr. 2019, from <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> s.v. 'Elgar, Edward'.

passage from the secondary-theme group of the Piano Quintet's first movement (see Example 0.2).

Example 0.2: Elgar, Piano Quintet, Op. 84, 1st movement, 5:21–6:5

Robert Anderson describes it as ‘one of the most dangerous passages in late Elgar. In a light context it would be in dubious taste; here it is a sorry lapse’.⁷² Writing in a similar vein, Diana McVeagh said of this movement (very likely thinking of this particular passage) that it provides ‘every now and then [...] an incongruous reminder of Elgar’s early salon style’.⁷³ This kind of criticism is implicitly gendered: the salon, so often coupled to the feminine or to the queer, was a bourgeois sphere of private music-making which Sophie Fuller has argued was an important base of support, both financial and personal, for Elgar throughout his career.⁷⁴ Elgar and many Elgarians took ‘distinct discomfort [in] acknowledging’ this debt.⁷⁵

Often, overtly simple passages of this kind, both in this movement and the chamber music more generally, either (1) function as part of a larger, more complex argument, which spans the whole movement rather than a mere few bars (see the analysis of the first movement of the Quintet in Chapter 4, Section 4.1, and the Violin Sonata’s Romance in Chapter 1, Section 1.3), or (2) prove to be more complicated than

⁷² Anderson, *Elgar*, p. 386.

⁷³ McVeagh, *Edward Elgar*, p. 178.

⁷⁴ Sophie Fuller, ‘Elgar and the Salons: The Significance of a Private Musical World’ in *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Byron Adams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 223–247; p. 241.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

initially supposed if they are subjected to close reading (see the analysis of the opening theme of the String Quartet's *Piacevole* in Chapter 3, Section 3.2). That is to say: part and whole do not map on to one another, in the manner of a synecdoche; diatonic 'triviality' is often implicitly criticised by, and subordinate to, chromatic 'complexity'.

It might appear, in this particular case, that Elgar's attempt to redeem his salonesque S-theme (suggestive, by association, of a world 'that opened its doors to women, to lesbians and gay men, to foreigners, to Catholics and Jews—to all those who were different and faced exclusion from the Anglican, patriarchal mainstream'⁷⁶) through the relative modernity of the movement's handling of large-scale form, and the chromatic complexity of its other thematic materials, is part of a musico-dramatic attempt to shake off what Ernest Walker called 'the heavy millstone of aristocratic fashionableness hanging round his [Elgar's] neck'.⁷⁷ However, despite the potentially sexist or homophobic overtones of this structural ploy, it must be borne in mind that the self-consciously simple theme *par excellence* in Elgar's music is the First Symphony's introduction, which he dubbed the 'Ideal Call' (see Example 0.3).



Example 0.3: Elgar, *Symphony No. 1*, Op. 55, 1st movement, 0:1–1:1

This theme functions in much the same way as the Quintet's S-material: namely, as a foil for the work's other, more overtly modern themes. That said, it implies a noble, almost heroic, sensibility rather anything remotely salonesque; that which is being implicitly criticised is a kind of unthinking masculine confidence, rather than bourgeois

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁷⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*

effeminacy. Furthermore, as well shall see in Chapter 2, Section 2.3, the bravura machismo of some of the Violin Sonata's first-movement material is consistently at odds with the weak harmonic syntax that underpins it, and by which it is subtly undermined. In a nutshell: simple, even banal, materials in Elgar's chamber music often form part of a more complex musical drama. It is important to recognise that such contrasts are often implicitly gendered, but it is also essential to acknowledge the fundamental ambiguities of such gendering.

Skip ahead both to 1964 and to the beginning of Stage 3, however, and critical attitudes seem to be less forgiving regarding Elgar's perceived lack of aesthetic engagement with the Great War. In Edward Greenfield's review of a recording of the Piano Quintet, for example, he states that 'one can understand why the work failed to establish itself when it appeared. Its frank Brahmsian affiliations are striking even today, and after the first world war they would have seemed stifling'.⁷⁸ For him, works composed after 1918 are clearly meant to shirk those traces of the old world which had led to conflict. Jerrold Northrop Moore puts the matter in the same way, again in relation to the Piano Quintet: when 'the younger survivors returned from the war, their first resolve would be to destroy every shred of the old world – the world which created the war that had maimed and coarsened their lives'.⁷⁹ This included the tradition of nineteenth-century neo-romanticism, exemplified by the melodic apotheosis which Moore perceives at the end of the Quintet's finale.⁸⁰

As already intimated, the 1960s and 1970s proved to be important decades for the consolidation of these kinds of aesthetic arguments, the implications of which extended far beyond Elgar. Indeed, Reynolds argues that it was in the 1960s that '[Wilfred] Owen became the preeminent symbol of war poetry for British popular culture'.⁸¹ This was in large part due to 'the fiftieth-anniversary anthologies [which] sanctified [a] canon of Great War poetry: the verse of junior officers steeped in Romantic literature who moved from patriotic innocence to horrified candour and eventually a recognition, in Owen's

⁷⁸ Greenfield, 'Review', p. 127.

⁷⁹ Moore, *Elgar*, p. 738.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* I follow Carl Dahlhaus here in distinguishing between romanticism post-1850, which is romantic in an unromantic age of realism and positivism (hence the necessitation of the prefix '-neo') and romanticism pre-1850, which is romantic in a romantic age: see *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (London: University of California Press, 1980 [1974]), p. 5.

⁸¹ Reynolds, *The Long Shadow*, p. 341.

now clichéd words, of “the pity of War” rather than its glory’.⁸² Anachronistically, then, Owen’s poetry was to become a synecdoche for Great War aesthetics. That being the case, the abstract and neo-romantic aspects of Elgar’s chamber music could not but fail to match Owen’s freshly celebrated ‘horrified candour’.

The views of another army captain, Arthur Bliss, this time on the Violin Sonata, serve to foreshadow another strand of later Elgar criticism, related to the one just outlined. The twenty-seven-year-old composer, who had been both invited to an informal premiere of the work at Severn House on 7 March 1919 and asked to turn Elgar’s pages at the piano, was fairly damning in his appraisal of it. Bliss did not want Elgar to invent a new style, however, but rather to return to the majesty and technique of his older music:

All I can recall now [of the event] was a certain embarrassment as to what I ought to say as the sonata ended. Was my disappointment due to the far from brilliant performance or to the belief that its musical substance had little in common with the genius of his earlier masterpieces? I hope I sat quiet, as if absorbed.⁸³

As the following chapters will show, however, the so-called ‘musical substance’ of Elgar’s chamber works is just as rich and technically accomplished as that of his middle-period works. This is not to deny that there are differences. Reflecting in 1928 on the reasons why the Quartet had received so few performances (‘no more than a single performance in London since it first appeared’, the reviewer claims⁸⁴), *The Manchester Guardian* suggested that ‘perhaps we all expected more colourful music from a master who had not then accustomed us to think of him as a chamber musician but who had often before shown his virtuosity in polychrome scoring’.⁸⁵ The ‘maximalism’ which Richard Taruskin takes to be indicative of music of the early modernist period (1890–1914) (namely, the ‘radical intensification of means towards accepted or traditional ends’, brought about by extending the musical work’s ‘length, amplifying [its] volume, and complicating [its] texture’⁸⁶), is showcased to great effect by much of Elgar’s

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Cited in Moore, *Edward Elgar*, p. 728.

⁸⁴ E.B., ‘Elgar’s Chamber Music’, p. 14.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 5.

orchestral music. Take, for example, the ‘noise chord’ in *Gerontius*, which functions as a representational substitute for God’s un-representable presence.⁸⁷ Example 0.4 shows it in piano reduction. Being particularly dissonant, it is difficult to label when taken out of its immediate context. While it could be an embellishment of any number of triads or seventh chords, it might also be a *sui generis* sonority. Though it could function as a dissonant upbeat to a consonant resolution, it might also be asserted in isolation as a terrible, ‘modernist’ noise. Elgar includes an unprecedented performance instruction next to it in the score too: ‘for one moment, must every instrument exert its fullest force’.⁸⁸ Both in terms of harmonic content and the sheer weight and volume of its sonic presentation, this chord seeks to go beyond that which it was usual for both composer and orchestra to produce in conjunction with one another.

120 *Molto allargando*

6 — 5

ffp

4 — 3

p

5 — 6

F# V7^{b9} i

Example 0.4: Elgar, *The Dream of Gerontius*, Op. 38, Part II, ‘noise chord’, 120:1–3

However, when it is read in the context of its unfolding in time, it becomes apparent that this five-note chord is merely a dominant seventh with a flattened ninth (decorated with a 6/4 appoggiatura), which resolves in completely orthodox fashion to F# minor. Although it is ‘presented sonically not simply as an upbeat to a perfect cadence but as pure, blistering, *fortissimo*, modernist noise’, it cannot be escaped that it is a common-practice sheep in modernist wolf’s clothing.⁸⁹ It is certainly no more harmonically

⁸⁷ Stephen Franklin, the protagonist of David Rudkin’s *Penda’s Fen*, describes this moment of *Gerontius* as ‘surely the most shattering moment in all of music’. See Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*, p. 168.

⁸⁸ Edward Elgar, *The Dream of Gerontius*, Op. 38: Study Score, ed. Robert Anderson (London: Novello and Company Limited, 1992), p. 191.

⁸⁹ Harper-Scott, ‘Aspects of Modernism in Elgar’s Music’ (2013), p. 24

advanced than anything in the chamber works and, as the excerpt from the Piano Quintet, depicted above, shows (refer back to Example 0.1), the chamber works are themselves not without unusual textures. While timbre remains a crucial difference between these two corpuses, then, it cannot account for the gulf of aesthetic *quality* that is believed to separate them.

In search of such a difference, F. H. Shera contrasts the middle-period works' 'undoubted taste for the cluster of short phrases', as well as 'collection[s] of nervously energetic musical fragments', with the chamber music, in which 'Elgar has been far less prodigal of his material than in the earlier [period]'.⁹⁰ In other words, ideas are more fully developed in the later works, and quick-fire thematic contrasts became less important. Again, it is difficult to see how these differences could have resulted in such radically different estimations of quality. Indeed, both Shera and *The Manchester Guardian's* music critic regarded these changes as evidence of the chamber music's novelty, rather than of the composer's creative decline.

Perhaps the difference is instead to be found in a comparison of more structural features, such as tonality and form. Harper-Scott's ground-breaking 2006 monograph demonstrates, through close readings of the First Symphony and of *Falstaff*, that Elgar's use of tonality in his middle period has a modernist edge, despite its outwardly traditional character. The Symphony, for instance, 'merely swallows tensions and leaves them rumbling inside' rather than genuinely resolving them:⁹¹ its closing in the key in which it began, namely A_b, cannot erase the fact that D major, A_b's most distantly related *Stufe*, is the Symphony's authentic tonal centre.⁹² Such an argument is harder to make for the chamber works. While many of their constitutive movements do not compose-out conventional *Ursätze* either, their means of achieving closure are often sensitive to the immanent properties of their own thematic materials, both chromatic

<https://jpehs.co.uk/2013/02/26/aspects-of-modernism-in-e/> (accessed 22/04/2017).

Harper-Scott makes this observation in relation to the layering of dissonance in Elgar's *In the South*: see rehearsal figures 20 to 25.

⁹⁰ F. H. Shera, *Elgar: Instrumental Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), pp. 14–15.

⁹¹ Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, pp. 195–196.

⁹² The Adagio's D major receives the most convincing structural tonicisation of the work so far, on account of the tonic-dominant polarity instantiated by the movement's primary and secondary themes, which is finally resolved by the D major 'Heaven Tune' in the movement's Coda (see p. 79). The opening movement's purported tonic A_b major, by contrast, is displaced by 'a shifting tonal quagmire' in the main body of the sonata; in the coda, the *Kopfton* (C = $\hat{3}$) fails to fall, and Elgar blackly puns on its meaning by harmonising it with both A_b major and diatonically distant A₇ minor triads (see p. 77).

and diatonic. This ultimately brings about far more convincing, if idiosyncratic, resolutions than would have been the case if Elgar's various *sui generis* tonal narratives had been forced, at the last, to capitulate to a mode of ending more characteristic of a reified classical practice, as Harper-Scott argues might be the case in the First Symphony.⁹³ To put the matter another way, despite the failure of the chamber music to synthesise completely with a Schenkerian model of musical unity, 'the fragmenting strategies of modernism' appear to be more categorically resisted.⁹⁴

Matthew Riley similarly stresses the chamber music's apparent preference for formal integration. Elgar's middle-period music, he claims, tends to utilise thematic reminiscences, both incongruous and non-functional, from earlier on in the work in question at the end of their finales so as to create a 'rupture' within the form. Moments of nostalgic introspection seek, but ultimately fail, to stop time: the cadenza of the Violin Concerto is the *locus classicus*.⁹⁵ No matter how ebullient the music that follows it, however, its displacement of a preceding moment of almost sublime serenity makes the conclusion appear burlesque rather than heroic. As Riley puts it, 'in most cases the worlds of past and present are not reconciled in any sort of synthesis, but are left in uneasy opposition'.⁹⁶ This Elgarian formal fingerprint might thus 'loosely be described as "modern"'.⁹⁷ The chamber works, by contrast, represent 'something of a throwback to Elgar's earlier practice'.⁹⁸ In the Violin Sonata's finale, for example, thematic reminiscence 'is integrated into the movement without any special rupture [...] It receives no unusual preparation and carries little sense of mystery';⁹⁹ and while the Piano Quintet features a number of "'alien" interjections which suggest the nagging memory of something more sinister', in the end, these 'reminiscences are entirely

⁹³ After lying dormant for some time, seemingly forgotten, the Symphony's A₁ major *Ursatz* is both re-engaged and closed at the finale's end. However, 'whether one considers the ending happy probably depends on whether one deems a single bar of $\hat{1}/I$ in A₁ sufficient to stabilise the immuring tonic after an hour of turbulence' (Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, p. 104). In other words, this ending might be heard to relate organically to the Symphony's introduction (because of its tonal background) or to be arbitrarily enforced (because of the ways in which foregrounds and middlegrounds often contradict that background). This ambiguity, Harper-Scott claims, is fundamental to the Symphony's effect (*ibid.*).

⁹⁴ Whittall, *Musical Composition*, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*, Chapter 2, pp. 20–51.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

“forgotten”, and the movement surges to its bright, triumphant conclusion’.¹⁰⁰ There is nothing bathetic about their denouements: they end happily, without any nagging, ‘modern’ doubts.

Can differences such as these be used to account for the chamber music’s more negative reception, which arguably begins with Bliss? The nuances of Elgar’s tonal arguments become apparent only through painstaking close reading, and it is unlikely that the commonplace valorisation of the middle-period works over the later ones rests on such technical foundations. Riley’s formal arguments are far more intuitive to a listener, but they are no more satisfactory in this regard. For example, he might intimate that Elgar’s use of thematic reminiscence is less radical in the chamber music, but he maintains that the same characteristic technique is still being used, albeit to different effect. Harper-Scott similarly acknowledges that, while the chamber works exhibit a modernism of a different kind (i.e. one which clings to the conservative, rather than modernist, pole of reactive modernism), they are still, broadly speaking, modernist: ‘the divergent styles of mature modernism represent divergent answers, not divergent questions, and in that sense it is imprecise to call one “modern” and the other “postmodern”.’¹⁰¹ In other words, recent scholars seem to think that the difference between the middle- and late-period works is principally one of degree, rather than of kind.

Something else beside mere formalism, then, must lie behind Bliss’s negative estimation of Elgar’s later works in comparison with his earlier ones. Andrew Neill’s comment that Elgar’s ‘fate was not that his music did not fit or was even out of date, but that he was seen as a part of that society which was partially responsible for the war’ is particularly astute in this regard, as it shifts attention from musical substance to the contexts of the works’ reception.¹⁰² Bliss’s preference for Elgar’s middle period is repeated nearly fifty years later by Michael Kennedy. For him, the moments of doubt and alienated retrospection which spice the middle-period music can be read as a critique of the pomp and circumstances of the Edwardian era.¹⁰³ In works written both

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁰¹ Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, p. 23.

¹⁰² Andrew Neill, ‘Elgar’s Creative Challenge, 1914–1918’ in *Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War*, ed. Lewis Foreman (Worcester: Elgar Works, 2014), pp. 207–236, at p. 224.

¹⁰³ This argument is greatly refined in Riley’s *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*.

post-war and post-emancipation of dissonance, however, such subtleties become more difficult to perceive and/or are heard to be less potent in effect. In other words, the later works suffer principally not because they are materially different from the middle-period works, but because they are composed in a separate historical moment, which was seen to require another approach from that which Elgar had pursued only a decade earlier: namely, one that was more overtly modernist. If the reputation of the chamber music was to be rehabilitated, then modernism would have to be expanded as a concept so that Elgar's subtle negations and/or extensions of tradition could be accommodated within it.

This is exactly what has happened in the last fifteen years or so, beginning with the publication of *The Cambridge Companion* in 2004. Indeed, the expansion of modernism as a concept, effected either explicitly or implicitly by the work of scholars such as Harper-Scott and Riley, is essential to Stage 4 of my reception history. As a result of such scholarly endeavours, modernism can be compelled to include long-range tonal arguments and uncanny thematic reminiscences, as well as dissonant simultaneities and savagely complex or austere textures. As a result, Elgar can be said to be as much at home within it as is Schoenberg. Grimley, for example, writes that 'the sense of alienation that pervades the chamber music is not a technical or aesthetic deficiency, but a vivid and compelling composing-out of a fractured musical identity'.¹⁰⁴ While these works might superficially emulate pre-war traditions in a post-war context, their 'crucial structural landmarks often seem strained or effortful rather than expansive or grandiloquent, as though the music were trying to break out of its boundaries rather than comfortably filling them. Such characteristics are not unique to Elgar's chamber works: indeed, they are common to modernist musical practice.'¹⁰⁵ (The proliferation of marked cadential evasions in the first movement of the Violin Sonata is a case in point: see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.) In other words, they do not pretend to make the world whole again; they acknowledge modern fragmentation, but in a manner which is subtler than that of Schoenberg and his school. Harper-Scott has advanced a similar argument: 'in works that could have had room for more serious musical language we can wonder what its suppression signifies. However consoling this music may be to

¹⁰⁴ Grimley, 'The chamber music and works for strings', p. 138.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

those desperate to take relief in whatever they can find, there is in it, as everywhere in Elgar's best music, a core of darker sentiment that saddens and disquiets'.¹⁰⁶

In tone, the interpretations of the chamber music offered by Harper-Scott and Grimley (Group B.2) are not altogether different from those made by critics in newspapers almost a century earlier (Group B.1); both groups are alert to novelty. Furthermore, they do not add much analytical flesh to the bones of the arguments of earlier commentators. This is not intended as a criticism but as a neutral observation: considering the relative dearth of information on these pieces, their comments on the chamber music (no matter how brief) are invaluable. One of the goals of this thesis is to substantiate the aesthetic judgements of these scholars with the same level of analytical rigour which they themselves have applied elsewhere in their work. In the following methodology section, I outline the general music theories that will underpin the thesis; in the proceeding chapter summaries, I go on to develop more precise, technical explanations of the novel conservatism/reactive modernism which the critics placed together in Group B have hypothesised.

0.2 Methodology

This thesis relies heavily on analysis. It utilises a number of different theories (principally, Schenkerian and neo-Riemannian theories of tonality, as well as the form-functional and Sonata-Theoretical perspectives of William Caplin, James Hepokoski, and Warren Darcy) in order to provide the most comprehensive interpretation of Elgar's chamber music to date. My commitment is to music first and theory second. In other words, my aim is invariably to explain the music that I hear, rather than to remain passively bound to every foundational tenet of a particular theory. The inability to explicate a piece of music by means of a single system is a fault or failing not of the music, but of the system in question. Indeed, it is scarcely justifiable even to categorise

¹⁰⁶ J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life* (London: ABRSM, 2011), pp. 110–111. Harper-Scott is here evoking Dahlhaus's well-known argument about diatonicism in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*: 'it may seem that diatonicism has been restored with one regressive *coup de main* to its former prechromatic rights—the rights of a “natural” language of music—but this is mere deception. The banished chromaticism is ever-present, even if it usually remains implicit'. In other words, what diatonicism 'means' is always already conditioned by post-chromatic significations, and so it cannot be used as a gateway through which to return to a genuinely prelapsarian world. See Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), p. 205.

this as a ‘fault’ or a ‘failing’: particular theories model particular kinds of coherence and cannot realistically be utilised as a means of explaining all the music which has ever been written (whatever the original intentions of their creators may have been).

Schenkerian analysis provides an excellent means of demonstrating the way in which harmonic ‘excrescences’ can be contextualised within an essentially diatonic and cadential middle- or background structure, to which they relate either as an alien specimen of syntactic disruption or as a form of contrapuntal intensification.¹⁰⁷ Neo-Riemannian analytical models, by contrast, allow these so-called excrescences to be understood in terms of their own *sui generis* voice-leading processes: they need not be parsed as distortions or embellishments of an underlying diatonic language, but rather in terms of their own autochthonous chromaticism. In a recent book, Richard Cohn argues that major and minor consonances can be grouped together to form coherent but non-diatonic systems of triads or tetrachords, which exist in close, often semitonal, voice-leading proximity to one another.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the twenty-four consonant triads and twenty-four relatively consonant tetrachords (i.e. dominant- and half-diminished sevenths), immanent in the equally tempered universe, are understood to function as ‘minimal perturbations’ (i.e. single semitone displacements) of far smaller sets of ‘dissonant’ simultaneities: namely, the four possible augmented triads or the three possible fully diminished sevenths. The augmented triad C–E–G \sharp , for example, can produce three major and three minor triads by toggling any one of its chord tones up or down by a semitone (i.e. E, C, G \sharp , f, a, c \sharp), while the diminished seventh C \sharp –E–G–B \flat can, through the application of the same voice-leading operation, produce eight relatively consonant tetrachords, four dominant and four half-diminished (i.e. C7, A7, F \sharp 7, E \flat 7, e $^{\flat 7}$, g $^{\flat 7}$, b $^{\flat 7}$, c $^{\sharp 7}$).¹⁰⁹ In Cohn’s harmonic universe, then, dissonance (manifested either by a single, symmetrical chord, such as an augmented or a diminished triad, or by the relationship *between* consonant, non-diatonic chords) has the potential to become generative and/or structural, while diatonicism can manifest

¹⁰⁷ Deborah J. Stein makes much the same point in her *Hugo Wolf’s Lieder and Extensions of Tonality* (Ann Arbor, London: U.M.I. Research Press, 1985): ‘the tonal norm established by Schenker’s system will function as a standard against which extended-tonal techniques can be gauged for harmonic conformity or innovation’, p. 2. The foundational text from which much else of Schenkerian theory stems is Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, ed. & trans. Ernst Oster (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 1979 [1935]).

¹⁰⁸ Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromatic Harmony and the Triad’s Second Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, particularly pp. 33–37, pp. 59–60, and p. 150.

itself (contrary to the natural, foundational status which is often assumed for it) as a foreground illusion.¹¹⁰

From the preceding account of these two competing models of pitch space, it might appear that the question, whether chromatic passages are heard to be logically structured or bizarre and amorphous, often depends on the music-theoretical technologies with which one chooses to parse them. However, it must be borne in mind that, while classical monotonality might be equally as constructed and artificial as any other system, theories rooted in diatonicism have been the basis of music-theory pedagogy for at least the last century.¹¹¹ As Harper-Scott points out, even in a post-emancipation of dissonance world, ‘the inheritance of historic subjectivity in the contemporary listener [...] is still conditioned by nursery rhymes, hymns, pop songs, and so on’, all of which are dependent on a tonal centre.¹¹² As such, the diatonic distortions that occur when enculturated listeners encounter a musical passage which operates according to a different pitch-space logic are often crucial to explanations of its phenomenological effect (the way in which it appears in a listener’s experience), even if these cannot necessarily be said to synthesise with the passage’s ontology (the way in which it exists, separate from one’s perception of it).

For example, if one were to play a D major chord in isolation, it would sound relatively neutral. If it were to be juxtaposed directly with an A_b major triad, however, it would take on a whole host of new characteristics (such as dark, bright, distant, or near) which would be conditioned by its relationship with the triad that preceded it. To put it in Cohn’s words, this is because ‘a listener spontaneously imagines an isolated triad [namely A_b ...] [as] signifying a tonic that bears its name’.¹¹³ Thus, even if the tritone relation between A_b and D is not tonal in any classical sense, it *becomes* tonal: that is, D major is heard as part of an expanded web of tonal relationships, centred on A_b, whether or not the latter triad is genuinely a tonic. Admittedly, Cohn goes on to qualify that ‘the tonic status of a triad requires confirmation, weakly through the remaining tones of its associated diatonic collection; more strongly by arranging those

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 106.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹² J. P. E. Harper-Scott, ‘Review: Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler and Philip Rupprecht (eds.), *Tonality 1900–1950: Concept and Practice* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012)’, *Music Analysis*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2014): 388–405, at 393.

¹¹³ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 8.

tones into a local cadence; more strongly yet by repeating that cadence, perhaps with supplementary rhetorical packaging, at the end of the movement or composition'.¹¹⁴ In other words, Cohn argues that, without some kind of tonicisation or diatonic contextualisation, a chord cannot *really* be a tonic. He fails to note, however, that to hear something as diatonically distant in the first place implies that one is always already listening in relation to an imagined tonal centre. This makes the resultant harmonic relationship *more* tonal, rather than less, even if it ultimately belongs to a non-classical syntax.¹¹⁵

In this thesis, I try to align more abstract, syntactic explanations of passages with interpretations that emphasise the ways in which they might be heard, moment to moment, by an enculturated listener, and to emphasise the points at which these two perspectives might be in tension with one another. This facilitates an examination of the intricate dialogue between processes of musical integration and proliferation in the chamber music, on which the classification of Elgar either as a novel conservative or as a reactive modernist is dependent. However, it is essential to note that, when I attempt to describe the way in which music might be heard, I am invariably describing the limitations of my own listening experiences, which are by no means objective. To legislate for reactions extrinsic to my own in the following analyses would be to necessitate excursions into music psychology, in which I am not qualified to engage. It remains the case, however, that my readings of individual pieces are influenced by a music education which no doubt shares commonalities with those of many others: that is to say, they have an inter-subjective foundation, based on an understanding of form, counterpoint, and harmony, which counters the possibility of aesthetic solipsism. To put it another way, my analyses are susceptible both to verification and to falsification.

That said, while that which I hear, or the new ways in which music theory has encouraged me to hear, are often crucial to my analyses, the following chapters do not focus solely on the chamber works as they are processed from moment to moment in experience. Their deep structures are considered to be just as important, even if they

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ See Steven Rings, 'Riemannian Analytical Values, Paleo- and Neo-' in *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Riemannian Music Theories*, eds. Edward Gollin & Alexander Rehding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 487–511, particularly p. 504; and David Kopp, 'Chromaticism and the Question of Tonality' in *ibid.*, pp. 400–416.

can be grasped as wholes only graphically, as opposed to aurally, because of the lengths of the movements involved and the limits of musical memory. Schenkerian analysis provides an invaluable means of facilitating such graphic representations. It can disclose relatively orthodox middle- or background structures in seemingly complex or disparate music, or vice versa. Interpreters risk being oblivious to such phenomena if they refuse to entertain the possibility that music has existence (perhaps paradoxically) both as an abstract, intellectual structure and as a series of relatively autonomous perceptual instants.¹¹⁶ Indeed, while the background and middleground components of Schenker's theory remain probably the most controversial, they make intuitive sense: when one is standing in a building, for example, the viewer in question cannot observe all of the building's parts simultaneously, but this does not lead them to suppose that the structure in question is not actually there. The same might be said of the tonal architecture of Elgar's chamber music.¹¹⁷ In short, if one is to read the chamber music properly, one must address both the music's retrospective tonal structure (our representations of which will necessarily be mediated by our chosen methodology and/or our hearing) and the ways in which it is likely to be experienced in prospect. The analytical methods outlined above furnish me with the tools with which to do this.

In addition to theories of tonality, form-functional theory and Sonata Theory have been vital to my understanding of Elgar's use of form. William Caplin's emphasis on syntax (namely, the ways in which a theme can be broken up into beginning, middle, and end functions, each of which is associated with a particular thematic type: i.e. statement, repetition, sequence, cadence, etc.) allows the analyst to determine the strength both of the build-up to the cadence and the cadence itself.¹¹⁸ This in turn allows him or her to determine the principal structural markers of the form in question. Subtle differences of these kinds often have enormous significance in the process of identifying

¹¹⁶ On this distinction, see David Temperley, 'The Question of Purpose in Music Theory: Description, Suggestion, and Explanation', *Current Musicology*, Vol. 66 (1999): 66–85.

¹¹⁷ Comparisons between music and architecture might seem to be flawed on account of the fact that one is temporal while the other is spatial, but Elgar himself sometimes discussed music in architectural terms. See Robert J. Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: John Lane: The Bodley Head, 1904), p. 13; and Moore, *Edward Elgar*, pp. 684–685.

¹¹⁸ See his *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 'The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Spring 2004): 51–118, and 'Beyond the Classical Cadence: Thematic Closure in Early Romantic Music', *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring 2018): 1–26.

the most crucial, structural moment of a movement. One candidate for the principal cadence and/or harmonic centre of a piece might be characterised by an unusual or idiosyncratic kind of material, while the other might be more overtly traditional, for example. In deciding which is ultimately more important, we come to discover whether the heart of a piece is more or less radical, proliferative or integrative (see Chapter 1, Case Study 1.3, for an example of this kind of decision-making in practice).

Furthermore, because this method of analysis proceeds from the bottom up rather than from the top down (in that it begins with local syntax rather than with abstract, architectonic blocks), it allows one to avoid projecting on to the movement a sonata type which might not otherwise have suggested itself. That said, one of the principal strengths of James Hepokoski's and Warren Darcy's theory of form is that it gives the analyst the scope to read modern works in relation to an older, reified sonata type.¹¹⁹ The meanings which result from a mismatch between these two things can sometimes be fundamental to a composition's effect or help to provide a heuristic frame of reference for interpreting material which might otherwise seem unmotivated or turgid. It could be that a densely chromatic theme will present itself where we might otherwise have expected an essential expositional cadence, for example. If so, it might prove fruitful to try to understand how it could be considered to exhibit some quotient of dominant function, albeit in a novel way (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). While adopting this model in relation to eighteenth and early-to-mid nineteenth-century music entails some potential historical pitfalls (in that one might read a *sui generis* form as being in dialogue with a model of which the composer was totally unaware, for example¹²⁰), I demonstrate in Chapter 2, Section 2.1, through a study of books in Elgar's personal library, that he was well aware of the so-called textbook sonata form. Indeed, one might

¹¹⁹ James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹²⁰ See, for example, Paul Wingfield, 'Beyond "Norms and Deformations": Towards a Theory of Sonata Form as Reception History', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2008): 137–177; William Drabkin, 'Mostly Mozart', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 148, No. 1901 (2007): 89–100; Julian Horton, 'John Field and the Alternative History of Concerto First-Movement Form', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 92, No. 1: 43–83; Steven Vande Moortele, 'In Search of Romantic Form', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 32, No. 3: 404–431 and *The Romantic Overture and Musical Form from Rossini to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); as well as Markus Neuwirth, 'Joseph Haydn's "witty" play on Hepokoski and Darcy's *Elements of Sonata Theory*', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*, Vol. 8, No. 1 <https://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/586.aspx>.

go as far as to say that *not to read* Elgar as being in some sort of dialogue with sonata-form tradition in his chamber music is potentially to fall prey to an anachronism.

In a nutshell, my rationale for using analysis is simply this: if Elgar was one of the most interesting tonal and formal thinkers of his day (and this thesis maintains that he was) it is only logical to utilise some of the most comprehensive and thought-provoking music theories which we have at our disposal in order to explain his music. Furthermore, assertions regarding the chamber music's novel conservatism/reactive modernism cannot be anything other than rhetorical if one does not identify particular technical features that exemplify it. The following chapter summaries serve to adumbrate the most fundamental of these.

0.3 Chapter Summaries

This thesis has a tripartite structure, which reflects the second part of its title. Chapter 1 seeks to elucidate Elgar's handling of tonality; Chapter 2 theorises Elgar's use of form; and Chapters 3 and 4 summarise Elgar's general aesthetic outlook in the chamber music by means of musical hermeneutics. Whatever the particular focus of an individual chapter, however, these individual elements are rarely treated in isolation. One cannot have form without tonality (and vice versa), and it is difficult (if not impossible) to consider harmonic or thematic structures properly if they are read apart from their potential meanings.

In **Chapter 1**, I demonstrate the different ways in which Elgar handles chromatic harmony by means of a series of three analytical case studies. The first of these (1.1) examines Elgar's use of octatonicism on the surface of the String Quartet's finale. This pitch collection is produced by adjacent chromatic seventh chords which are connected by semitonal voice leading. The central question this section seeks to answer is whether chromatic writing of this kind instantiates a new kind of harmonic syntax, which jettisons tonality, or whether it serves merely to connect diatonic pillars at a deeper level of structure as part of a cadential middleground. In debating this question, I draw on the music theories of Richard Cohn and Ernst Kurth, who are representatives of the former and the latter view respectively.

The second case study (1.2) details Elgar's prolongation of a dissonant diminished seventh in the middleground of the Quartet's first movement. It argues that

this linear voice-leading entity can be seen to function as part of a background auxiliary cadence, which is then repeated at a surface level as a means of bringing about the movement's end.

The third case study (1.3) argues that the Violin Sonata's second movement has an entirely chromatic background, built on a cycle of equal major thirds which divides the octave into three equal parts. I draw on a newspaper article, written by Elgar in 1915, in which he describes the ultimate tonality of chromatic-third progressions on the musical surface, in support of an argument for the tonality of this movement's chromatic background. The article in question was written only four years before the Romance, which leads me to suggest that the latter might demonstrate in practice what the former posited abstractly.

In general, these analyses, which chart a trajectory from foreground to background, demonstrate that, no matter how thoroughgoing Elgar's use of chromaticism becomes, elements of chromatic proliferation serve merely to diversify the monotonal, triadic unity of the movements in question.

Chapter 2 is composed of three sections. In the first (2.1), I seek to establish what sonata form meant for Elgar, exploring his familiarity both with contemporary music theory textbooks and with particular pieces of canonic repertory. This process lays the groundwork for the sonata-form interpretations provided in Sections 2.2 and 2.3.

The first of these sections comprises an analysis of the E major finale of Elgar's Violin Sonata. For the most part, the architectonics of this movement are normative. However, where the listener might be led to expect a cadence at the end of the exposition, he or she is presented instead with a highly dissonant, descending sequence of augmented and major triads, which is scaffolded by a tonic Lydian scale in the bass. I interpret this passage as a novel structural dissonance: the non-diatonic succession of triads emphasises dissonance, while the Lydian scale (i.e. E F# G# A# B C# D# E) can be parsed as an oblique reference to the pitch collection of the structural dominant of E major, owing to its raised A#. In this sense, Elgar might be described as trying to translate the dominant into a modern musical language, which enables it to be perceived once more as a dissonant novelty, rather than as a consonant cliché. In other words, he

makes the dominant new. The idea of ‘making it new’ is contextualised by a discussion of Ezra Pound’s philosophy of poetic translation at the beginning of the section.

In Section 2.3, I interpret the first movement of the Violin Sonata in relation to the sonata-form practices of Schumann and Brahms. Particular attention is paid to the interactions finessed by these composers between harmonic processes of tonal pairing and architectural principles of tonal polarity. In Elgar’s movement, as in the music of his German predecessors, the former is used to undermine the latter: the teleology immanent to the classical sonata form, in which two clear-cut and strongly tonicised harmonies are set up as argumentative antagonists, is subverted by an ambiguous harmonic colloquy. While the movement itself is quite conservative,¹²¹ I argue that its critique of teleology and heroic drive becomes newly poignant in the context of the First World War: a conflict characterised by static trench warfare and ‘heroic’ platitudes.¹²²

In **Chapter 3**, I compare Elgar’s *Gerontius* with the *Piacevole* from his String Quartet. The former work is seen by some to be one of Elgar’s most radical;¹²³ the latter is part of a body of work which is sometimes thought to represent Elgar at his most conservative.¹²⁴ To help interpret their contradictory aesthetics, I draw on a sketch by Edward Burne-Jones which depicts a young girl’s shock as she discovers that which appears to be a ghost folded up in a drawer. Ambiguity is built into the image: is the ghost merely a figment of the girl’s imagination (in the form of a play of light and shadow among the folds of a garment) or has the girl, who has not yet succumbed to the blinkered rationalism of adulthood, seen the clothes in the drawer for what they truly are: namely, a supernatural presence? I use these opposed readings to interrogate the kinds of tonality used in *Gerontius* and the *Piacevole*. While *Gerontius* features a number of different types of chromatic writing, which are often thought severely to

¹²¹ As Elgar himself conceded, ‘I fear that it [the Violin Sonata] does not carry us any further but it is full of golden sounds and I like it[:] but you must not expect anything violently chromatic or cubist’: see Jerrold Northop Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 316.

¹²² For a poignant illustration of the drudgery and repetition of war-time conflict, in which the only heroism is that of the flowers and birds that continue to flourish regardless of human idiocy, see Edward Thomas’ ‘War Diary’, 1 January–28 April 1917 in *Edward Thomas, Collected Poems*, ed. R. George Thomas (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), pp. 139–172.

¹²³ See, for example, McVeagh, *Edward Elgar*, p. 179.

¹²⁴ See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 179; McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker*, p. 177; and Robin Stowell (ed.), ‘Traditional and progressive nineteenth-century trends: France, Italy, Great Britain and America’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 250–265, at p. 262.

disrupt tonality, I demonstrate that the opening part of its first prelude might still be said to compose out a single tonic. Thus, while the oratorio's text attempts to describe the appearance of the Christian beyond (i.e. heaven, hell, and purgatory) in which one's experience of both mind and body is radically decentred, Elgar does not progress 'beyond' monotonicity, despite his use of various chromatic special effects. As in the Burne-Jones sketch, the extraordinary resolves back into the quotidian; chromatic antagonisms at the surface are synthesised by a diatonic background. *Gerontius*'s overriding commitment to monotonicity is most clearly exemplified in the prelude to Part II. This is meant to prepare the moment in which the eponymous protagonist's soul leaves his body and finds itself stuck in a liminal state somewhere between corporeality and incorporeality. Elgar's music successfully conveys a sense of hope (namely, that Gerontius's soul will perhaps one day be saved), but it does not capture the decentred existential state which its libretto describes. The *Piacevole*, by contrast, appears to be relatively simple in its construction. Close reading, however, demonstrates that its structural levels are split between two keys. By the movement's end, it is difficult to say definitively whether it is in a single key at all. Rather than composing out a coherent tonal whole, it appears merely to begin and to end on a C major chord. In this sense, the *Piacevole* goes beyond tonality in a way which is far more profound than in *Gerontius* or, indeed, in much other nineteenth-century music.¹²⁵ Classical monotonicity manifests itself as an absent presence; much like the girl in Burne Jones's sketch, the listener can be regarded as being in communion with a ghost.

In **Chapter 4**, I argue that Elgar's Piano Quintet might be read as a tussle among modernist, liberal, and conservative theories of music history. In Section 4.1, I suggest that the paragenetic introduction-coda frame of the first movement presents music history, past and present, as a series of overlaid geological strata. The middleground articulates a conventional periodic structure, while the surface is predominated by both pre-classical-sounding two-part counterpoint and a strangely gelid instrumental texture, which negates romantic principles of orchestration. It is difficult to know which of these three features is most important: different aesthetic periods engage in colloquy

¹²⁵ Perhaps this is what Elgar meant when he said that 'there is something in it [the middle movement of the String Quartet] that has never been done before [...] Nothing you would understand [Elgar's friend, Arthur Troyte Griffith], merely an arrangement of notes'. Cited in Brian Newbould, "'Never Done Before": Elgar's Other Enigma', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 77, No. 2, 1996: 228–241, at 228.

ambiguously. The main sonata body of the movement, by contrast, is both relatively straightforward in design and overtly teleological. However, the context in which this traditional construction is heard is conditioned by the weird paragenetic frame which encloses it. I argue that the sonata might be thought to represent a liberal theory of history, centred on the idea of Progress; the paragenetic frame indicates a challenge, issued to it by a more overtly modernist philosophy of history, in which past and present exist simultaneously, rather than in linear sequence.

In Section 4.2, I argue that the Quintet's Adagio begins with a classical period but that it soon becomes increasingly modern in its pitch organisation. For example, the period's consequent phrase, which displays an early-romantic handling of cadential evasion, malfunctions; the secondary theme uses intra-thematic, tertiary chromaticism after a mid-nineteenth-century fashion; and the development finishes with an example of modal writing, paralleled in the early twentieth-century practice of Debussy. Two possible interpretations of this time-travelling narrative are provided: either Elgar is implying that composers cannot hide in the past (and that they will necessarily find themselves dragged back into the present) or he is modelling a kind of musical past, which is defined ahistorically and can be made to accommodate later developments that met with his approval.

In Section 4.3, by contrast, I argue that there are no notable twentieth-century anachronisms in the Quintet's finale: Elgar composes out the most conservative sonata form of any of the 1918–1919 chamber movements, which is scaffolded by an orthodox *Ursatz*. It is almost as if, having entertained the possibility of a quasi-modernist aesthetic, Elgar finally turns his back on such experimentation. He concludes not only the Piano Quintet but also (more generally) his spell of chamber-music composition with a thoroughly conservative message. However, these works are not, as Harold C. Schonberg has claimed, 'the music of a composer talking to himself'.¹²⁶ Rather, a nuanced conversation between Elgar and the twentieth century can be discerned if one listens hard enough. The following chapters attempt to capture such delicate effects analytically and thus to facilitate a fresh hearing of this dialogue.

Indeed, the basic argument of these chapters as a whole is perhaps best summed up by the early-twentieth-century music critic, Ernest Newman. Writing in 1912, he

¹²⁶ Schonberg, 'Music View', p. 113.

argued that musical clichés had become a lie that it was healthy to discard, but that ‘we cannot grasp the truth except with the help of some portion of the lie. That is to say, if a composer cuts us adrift from *all the clichés* of the past we are utterly lost’.¹²⁷ Indeed, it is exactly this outcome which he accuses Schoenberg of bringing about in his *Five Orchestral Pieces*, premiered in London by Henry Wood in 1912. Elgar’s chamber works, I claim, refashion a number of tonal clichés and, in doing so, make them new: lies are converted into new truths. Rather than seeking simply to recreate a nineteenth-century idiom, Elgar approached traditional harmonic and formal materials without assumptions and was thus able to fashion new structures out of them. He was certainly not a rentier, living off the surpluses generated by romanticism’s earlier achievements; he produced new aesthetic objects for contemplation, rather than merely repackaging the labours of his forerunners.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Ernest Newman, ‘À propos of Schönberg’s Five Orchestral Pieces’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 55, No. 825 (Feb. 1, 1914): 87–89, italics in the original, at 87.

¹²⁸ Samuel Hynes makes the same argument about the poet Edward Thomas; the rentier metaphor is borrowed from him. See his ‘Edward Thomas’ in *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 91–97 at p. 96.

Chapter 1: Chromaticism and Tonality

This chapter looks to provide snapshots both of Elgar's use of chromatic harmony in his chamber music and of the various interactions, disruptive or edifying, such chromaticisms facilitate with the overarching tonalities of the movements in which they are deployed. To this end, three case studies are presented, each of which focusses on a different chromatic technique. The first (1.1) explores the use of smooth voice-leading transformations between same-set octatonic seventh chords in the String Quartet's finale; the second (1.2) discloses the prolongation of a middleground diminished seventh in the Quartet's first movement, which can be contextualised as part of a background cadence; and the third (1.3) examines how a tonic is 'prolonged' through a background cycle of major-third-related chords in the Violin Sonata's Romance. As a whole, this chapter charts a course which begins with an examination of local chromatic detail and concludes with a discussion of global chromatic structure.

It is not the intention of this chapter to contribute to the theory of nineteenth-century chromaticism *per se*: its aims are expressly analytical and thus specific rather than general; existing theories are explicated as and when relevant to the arguments of the particular case studies in which they occur.¹ Neither does this chapter advance a singular argument: it provides detailed readings of three movements which behave in relatively *sui generis* ways. Nevertheless, it still has two overarching themes. As Patrick McCreless has observed, Elgar's 'chromatic usage is technically as adept as that of his German peers'.² Detailed, systematic analyses of his work, however, are largely absent from Anglo-American studies of chromatic music.³ This chapter begins the process of plugging a gap in our historical understanding of both the development and the

¹ For a particularly succinct history of developments in chromatic harmony from the seventeenth century to the early 1900s, see Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromatic Harmony and the Triad's Second Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 206–208. For an overview of the developments which have characterised the *theory* of chromatic music, see David Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 33–186.

² Patrick McCreless, 'Elgar and theories of chromaticism' in *Elgar Studies*, eds. J. P. E. Harper-Scott & Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1–49, at p. 1.

³ Notable exceptions are J. P. E. Harper-Scott's *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and 'Elgar's deconstruction of the *belle époque*: interlace structures and the Second Symphony' in *Elgar Studies* (2007), pp. 172–219.

geographical scope of chromatic tonality in the early twentieth century by paying more attention to the work of a composer whose complex engagements with chromatic harmony have not yet been sufficiently elucidated. Furthermore, all three case studies touch on recent debates between neo-Riemannians and Schenkerians about whether chromatic harmonic progressions are tonal or not.⁴ Insofar as such debates are applicable to Elgar's music, I look to demonstrate (where appropriate) that apparently errant harmonies or progressions are best contextualised within a larger tonal framework in order that their structural meaning(s) can properly be understood. In the third case study, I use an article Elgar wrote on harmony for the *Westminster Gazette* in 1915, only four years before the composition of the Violin Sonata, to argue that he shared this point of view.

Case Study 1.1: Octatonic voice leading and diatonic function (String Quartet, Allegro molto)

In this case study I focus on a short, two-bar passage from the end of the Allegro molto's development section, which explores smooth, octatonic voice-leading relationships between seventh chords. I look to ascertain whether this short passage can be heard to form part of a larger, coherent tonal gesture or if it effects a change of syntax which swaps the movement's predominantly diatonic frame of reference for an octatonic one and thus establishes a moment of disjuncture within the form. My answer to this question is informed by analysis both of the passage in question and of earlier (albeit less piquant and transparent) instances of octatonic voice leading in the exposition. Before going any further, however, I will first provide an impressionistic sketch of the main events leading up to the moment in question so that readers might better orientate themselves in the following technical discussion.

The finale of Elgar's String Quartet begins with a taut introduction in which clipped iambs in the cello and viola are contrasted with glittering semiquavers in the violins. E minor predominates, albeit flashes of its submediant major are never far

⁴ For an example of the former view, see David Kopp, 'Chromaticism and the Question of Tonality' in *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Riemannian Music Theories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 400–416; and for the latter, Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, pp. 207–208.

away. The P theme begins at rehearsal figure 38; it is small ternary in design. Characterised by a *brilliante* melody in the violin, which is recycled by the viola and second violin in a process of antiphonal exchange, its opening A section effects a number of weak contrapuntal closes in E minor. At 38:6, however, the ensemble become shipwrecked for four bars and oscillate yearningly between a dominant- and a leading-tone diminished-seventh chord. On the third beat of 38:9, the building wave of energy, underpinned both by a growing desire for resolution and a series of crescendos, breaks and a series of falling gestures and chromatic slippages ensue as part of the transition to P's contrasting middle. Elided with the exposition's first proper cadence at 39:1 – namely, a VI: IAC – this new theme is characterised principally by sequential continuation, albeit a tonic *Stufe* is articulated by a i: IAC between 39:6 and 7, which marks the exposition's second cadence. P's A theme returns in E minor at rehearsal figure 40. Five bars later, its basic idea is condensed into a single bar and repeated as part of a haze of *brilliante*, semiquaver tutti. This surging wave of energy breaks once more to a series of descending chromatics at 41:1, which again fail to provide resolution to the expected local tonic, albeit they preface the return of introductory materials at 41:7.

A change of mood manifests itself at rehearsal figure 42. Tonic minor is transformed into a dominant seventh in preparation for the arrival of the secondary theme group in the subdominant major. However, the resultant V7/IV chord between 42:6 and 7 seems almost to evaporate as a result of textural attenuation. The A major chord that comes after it appears almost in spite of (rather than because of) its preceding dominant and therefore does not sound overtly cadential. S-space is composed of two themes: S1 is loosely periodic in structure (see rehearsal figures 43 and 44), while S2 is more sequential in character and awash with half-diminished sevenths (44:5 to 45:1). Both effectively prolong A major, albeit S2 plays itself out on the chromatic peripheries of this global subdominant's diatonic territory. The nearest S1 gets to a conventional diatonic cadence is the IV: HC/V at 43:4, which figures as the third principal cadence of the exposition.

In the words of Daniel M. Grimley, the development section (rehearsal figure 45 to 49:1) is characterised by ‘gestational flux’.⁵ It is principally composed of a series of ascending and descending sequential fifth motions. Its final bars, however, are set apart from the preceding welter through the use of an extended string technique (see the will-o’-the-wisp-like ponticello tremolandi in the cello, viola, and second violin from rehearsal figure 48:9 to 10 in Example 1.1). This is the only occurrence of such a technique in all of the chamber music. Despite (or perhaps because of) its ephemerality it is the part of the movement which has most frequently sparked critics’ hermeneutic imaginations. In Basil Maine’s words, ‘all that has gone before in this and earlier movements has been essentially the music of daylight and the open air: so much so that this sudden break in its genial warmth is strangely sinister, as if it were a capricious and wilful disturbance of the clear, delightful atmosphere’.⁶ W. H. Reed similarly writes that ‘in the midst of all the warmth and vivacity of this movement’, the passage in question can be heard as ‘a warning that there are other and harsher moods of nature. But it is only a fleeting one, and the hearer basks in summer warmth until the end of the work’.⁷ According to such accounts, the ponticello music is an alien interjection that appears as if from nowhere and without apparent motivation.

The musical score for Example 1.1 consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The Violin I staff features a melodic line with trills and slurs, with some notes marked with '07'. The Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello staves play a tremolando pattern, marked with *p* ponticello in the first half and *f* in the second half. A large bracket spans the top of the first three staves. Below the staves are notes: e₃, C#₄, f#₃, D#₄, g#₃, F₄, a#₃, G₄.

Example 1.1: Elgar, String Quartet, Op. 83, 3rd movement, 48:9–10

⁵ Daniel M. Grimley, “‘A smiling with a sigh’: the chamber music and works for strings’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, eds. Daniel M. Grimley & Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 120–138, at p. 134.

⁶ Basil Maine, *Elgar: His Life and Works*, Vol. II (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1993), p. 267.

⁷ W. H. Reed, ‘Elgar’ in *Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Volume 1, A–H (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 372–377 at p. 375.

It is not only its unusual texture which inspires such poeticism, however, but also the passage's characteristic use of chromatic harmony. It is composed of a series of four ascending half-diminished chords separated by whole step, each of which is juxtaposed with a dominant seventh. The fundamental roots contained within each dominant/half-diminished pair are separated by a minor third; the combined pitch aggregate of both chords produces an octatonic scale, with no common-tone retention between either harmony (see Figure 1.1).⁸

Figure 1.1: Octatonic Poles, 48:9–10

Such relationships are thought to be ‘polar’ in quality: i.e. the relevant chords are the furthest apart from one another it is possible to be in voice-leading terms while still maintaining both the same harmonic cardinality and membership of the same octatonic scale. Because Elgar repeats this initial octatonic–polar progression three

⁸ This method of representing octatonic poles comes from Ernő Lendvai, *Verdi and Wagner* (Budapest: International House Budapest, 1988), p. 139.

times, the music passes through the two remaining octatonic collections and returns to its starting point at 48:10 beat 4 (albeit the initial scale is now instantiated by a different octatonic–polar relationship between $a\sharp^{07}$ and G7). Despite both the macroharmonic return, and the use of seventh chords, so often used to imply perfect or plagal resolutions, the syntax of this ponticello interjection seems distinct from that of classical diatonic tonality. Indeed, Richard Cohn has suggested that, while seventh chords have well-established diatonic functions (i.e. they are reducible in some way to triads that relate to each other as *Stufe* in a fundamentally diatonic system) they can also participate in a separate syntax which prioritises smooth, chromatic voice leading between other seventh chords over and above explicitly triadic forms of connection.⁹ Indeed, for him, it is no longer the harmonic pillars at either side of a progression which matter most – as in classical prolongation – but the quality and voice-leading magnitude of the various contrapuntal relationships that bridge the gap between them. An examination of the ponticello interjection and its immediate context helps to make this idea clearer.

The two bars in question are themselves flanked by a B4/3 chord and a root-position G dominant seventh, which resolves to C major at 49:1 (see Example 1.2). The argument of a theorist such as Ernst Kurth might be that B4/3 and G7 are ‘basic pillars’ [*Grundpfeiler*] (akin to middleground *Stufen* in Schenkerian parlance), which articulate a loosely cadential structure; the octatonic–polar transformations are attached to these pillars merely as a means of contrapuntal embellishment.¹⁰ (In much the same way, Schenkerians often interpret *non-functional* linear intervallic patterns – a chain of 7–3 suspensions, for example – as connecting the *functional* harmonies at their beginning and end points.) In this context, the ‘pillars’ in question can be telescoped so as to produce a $V^{4/3}/iii-V$ (or pre-dominant to dominant) progression in C, on account of the $F\sharp-G\flat$ neighbour-note motion in the bass. Rather than necessitating the theorisation of a new harmonic syntax, the dissonant, octatonic polar harmonies that are squeezed between them might be encompassed under what Kurth

⁹ See Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, pp. 148–158.

¹⁰ Ernst Kurth, ‘Romantic harmony and its crisis in Wagner’s “Tristan”’, reproduced in Lee A. Rothfarb, *Ernst Kurth: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 145. For further exposition of this concept, see Geoffrey Chew, ‘Ernst Kurth, Music as Psychic Motion and “Tristan und Isolde”: Towards a Model for Analysing Musical Instability’ in *Music Analysis*, Vol. 10, No. 1/2 (Mar. - Jul., 1991): 171–193, at 178–179; 187.

terms ‘an enormously broad expansion of the idea of applied dominants’: that is, they can be said to function as a form of preparation for the diatonic pillar that is to come after them, whether that proves in practice to be a pre-dominant, a dominant, or a tonic.¹¹ Local detail is brushed over so as to account for shallow middleground coherence. For Cohn, by contrast, any such diatonic logic which attempts to connect up pillars of these kinds is necessarily specious. These harmonies are the by-products of surface, chromatic voice-leading motions: they do not generate counterpoint, like *Stufen* in a diatonic middleground, but are rather subordinate to it.

Structural Pillar Massively expanded pre-dominant Structural Pillar

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

C: V_3^4/iii $V_7 I$

49

Example 1.2: 48:8–49:1

The tensions between these theories of Kurth and Cohn, which prioritise middleground and surface voice leading, respectively, cannot ultimately be resolved in favour of either author. Each piece of music will treat both its structural pillars and the voice-leading spaces which form between them very differently. Sometimes pillars will be arbitrary (as when a composer engages in a string of attractive voice-leading transformations and just happens to begin in one place and to arrive in another) whereas others will be planned and necessary (as when a composer wants to establish one *Stufe* at point A and another at point B as part of a larger, pre-ordained tonal scheme). Consequently, both theories need to be trialled on particular pieces, at

¹¹ Kurth, ‘Romantic harmony’, p. 147.

which point one can make provisional and necessarily specific conclusions about which might work best in a given context. The remainder of the present case-study looks to exemplify this process in its analysis of the finale's ponticello interjection and its surrounding voice-leading contexts.

§1.1.1 A Cohnian reading

For Cohn, chromatic tetrachordal voice leading cannot be said to compose out diatonic *Stufen* because it often articulates a separate syntax which operates according to non-tonal principles. One of the defining features of this new syntax is its utilisation of half-diminished and dominant-seventh chords as harmonic substitutes for fully diminished sevenths. While this might seem to put the dissonant cart before the relatively consonant horse, there is a compelling formal efficiency to Cohn's argument. The three possible fully diminished harmonies (i.e. C-E_b-F_#-A, C_#-E-G-B_b, and D-F-A_b-C_b) can be used to generate all twenty-four half-diminished and dominant sevenths by adjusting individually each of their chord tones upwards and downwards by a semitone. For example, both B7 (B-E_b-F_#-A) and c^{o7} (C-E_b-F_#-B_b) 'minimally perturb' a fully diminished seventh (i.e. C-E_b-F_#-A): the dominant tetrachord displaces its first chord tone downwards by a minor second, while the half-diminished sonority adjusts its last chord tone upwards by a semitone. Elgar's ponticello interjection appears to make this generative relationship explicit: the various neighbour notes (marked with boxes in Example 1.1) with which Elgar decorates Violin 1's ascending fourth progression (D-G) serve to elucidate momentarily the fully diminished sonorities which make possible the octatonic transformations between dominant- and half-diminished seventh chords. In other words, he foregrounds the fact that, in order to pass from one non-symmetrical seventh chord to another, one must move *through* a (literally or virtually present) symmetrical diminished triad.

The Cohn-derived graph at Figure 1.2 uses three 'spiders' to capture this relationship pictorially. Fully diminished sevenths are indicated by the circular body of each 'spider' and the four legs attached to each of its sides represent the half-diminished and dominant chords one can derive by displacing any one of the body's

chord tones by a minor second.¹² Each set of legs is modally matched: tetrachords to the right-hand side of the body are dominant, while those to the left are half-diminished. The three different spiders can be joined together through so-called octatonic pools, which are produced by combining the dominant sevenths of one spider with the same-rooted-half-diminished sevenths of another.¹³ Connection between chords in this pool is guaranteed through their membership of the same octatonic scale.

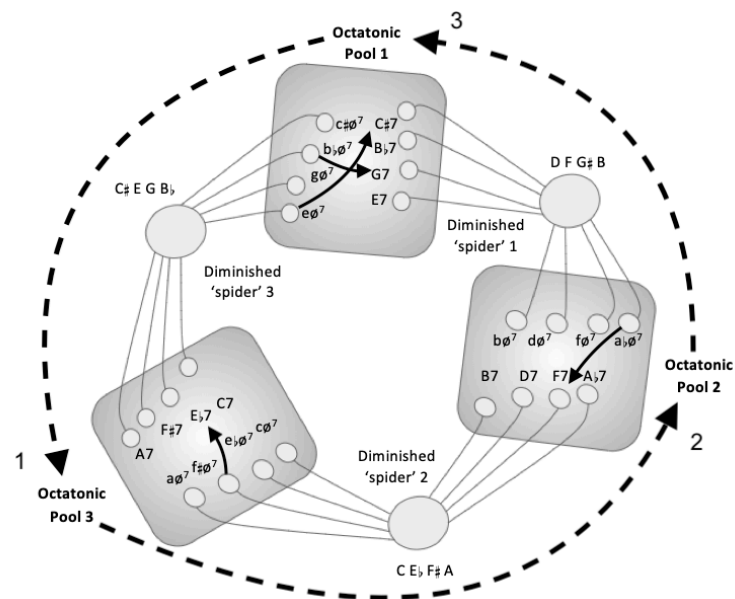


Figure 1.2: Octatonic Pools, Diminished Spiders

More specifically, Figure 1.2 captures the way in which the finale's ponticello interjection traverses each octatonic pool and thus completes a full, anti-clockwise rotation through tetrachordal voice-leading space (see the dashed arrows). In this brief musical parenthesis Elgar appears to leave behind the primarily triadic and diatonic syntax of the rest of the movement in order to embark on an exploration of a different sound world: tonality is seemingly abandoned for non-tonality. To this extent, analysis appears to reinforce the impressionistic accounts of Maine and Reed quoted earlier: the strangeness of the music between 48:9 and 10 is a product both of its unusual timbral quality *and* its tetrachordal syntax, which breaks the frame of the

¹² See Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, Figure 7.10, p. 154.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Figure 7.15, p. 157.

movement's established diatonicism. However, various details serve to complicate this interpretation.

As shown in Figure 1.3, each of the exposition's three cadences (in C major, E minor, and A major, respectively) is embellished with tetrachordal voice leading derived from octatonic pools 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Abstracted from their immediate harmonic contexts, these brief forays into the tetrachordal universe produce a clockwise rotation through pitch space, which the octatonic-polar passage will later reverse. Viewed in this way, the ponticello interjection is not genuinely alien: it is foreshadowed by aspects of the exposition's voice leading. Indeed, it seems almost organic in motivation.

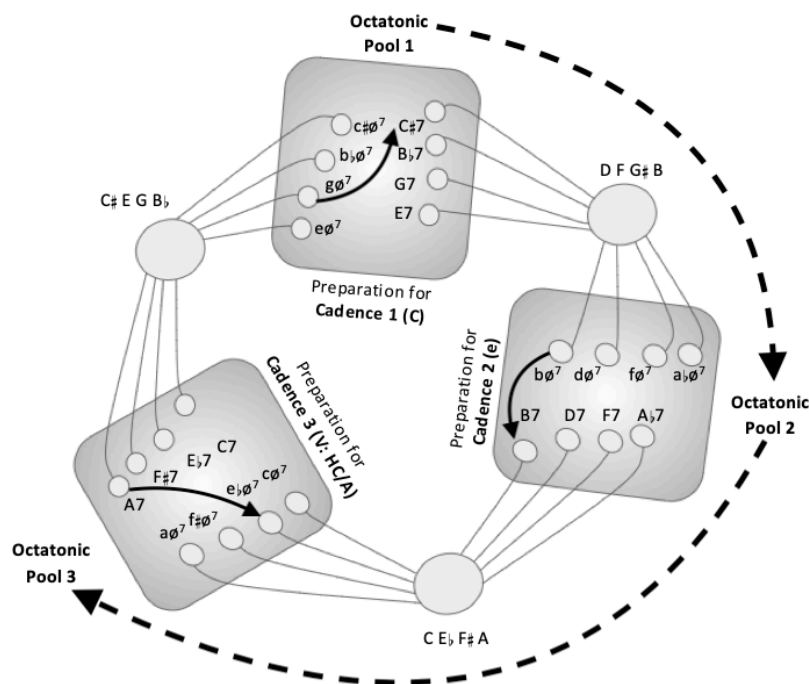


Figure 1.3: Octatonic Pools, Diminished Spiders

Unlike the octatonic poles just discussed, however, the individual juxtapositions between these chordal pairs (namely, g^{07} and $C\#7$, b^{07} and $B7$, and $A7$ and e^{07}) do not produce a full octatonic scale. They are characterised by a different kind of voice leading, albeit one which still relies on an underlying octatonic collection. When moving from b^{07} ($B D F A$) to $B7$ ($B D\# F\# A$), for example, only two notes are altered: i.e. D and F both move upwards in parallel, semitonal motion to $D\#$ and $F\#$, while the other two chord tones (namely, B and A) remain stationary. To my mind,

this is reminiscent of oblique voice leading in counterpoint, in which one voice remains static while the other moves by step. This particular transformation might be expressed by the shorthand formula $O^{2(3)}$, which I have adapted from Cohn: O stands for oblique motion; the interval of the stationary dyad (a major second between A and B) is described by the first superscript number and the interval expressed by the active dyad (a minor third between D and F or $D\#$ and $F\#$) is described by the second superscript number, enclosed in brackets.¹⁴ Cohn denotes this kind of motion by means of the letter ‘S’, which stands for ‘similar motion’.¹⁵ However, similar motion implies that all voices move in the same direction but with different voice-leading magnitudes. In my view, the concept of oblique motion captures better this kind of tetrachordal relation because of its emphasis both on moving *and* static voices.

(NB: In other parts of the exposition, Elgar effects transformations between tetrachords of the same species (i.e. dominant or half-diminished), which belong to the same fully diminished progenitor, or ‘spider’. These also voice lead to one another in a slightly different way: two voices remain stationary, while the other two move in or out from one another in contrary semitonal motion. For example, if E7 were to become G7, its root note would be displaced upwards by a semitone, while its third would be lowered by a semitone (i.e. $E\ G\#\ B\ D \rightarrow F\flat\ G\flat\ B\ D$). In this case, a single superscript number would still be used after the O to indicate the interval of the stationary dyad B–D, but it would be followed by a superscript negative sign in brackets ⁽⁻⁾, which indicates that the active dyad contracts from a major third E–G# to a major second F \flat –G \flat (i.e. $O^{3(-)}$). However, if E7 were voiced in such a way that its G# was lower in pitch than its fundamental, as in a 6/5 chord, then the transformation would be relabelled $O^{3(+)}$: the B–D dyad would remain stationary, but G#–E would expand outwards to G \flat –F \flat , thus producing a minor seventh.)

It is not only in terms of voice-leading magnitude that the seventh-chord relations depicted in Figures 1.2 and 1.3 differ. While the octatonic–polar progressions in the former suggest a genuinely chromatic context, those in the latter (considered so far only abstractly) can also clearly be heard to imply diatonic cadential functions when reinserted into their broader voice-leading contexts: indeed, they are

¹⁴ See Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 155

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

responsible for effecting the exposition's three principal cadences (see the analytical sketches provided in §1.1.2). In light of this, one might go so far as to say that the exposition encourages us to interpret octatonic voice leading in an explicitly diatonic way. This, in turn, vindicates the Kurthian reading of the octatonic–polar progression between 48:9 and 10, provided in the previous section. Despite its extreme chromaticism, the ponticello interjection is subordinate to two underlying diatonic, structural pillars, which serve to tonicise C major at 49:1. Furthermore, one can interpret this octatonic–polar–inflected cadence as marking the beginning of an off-tonic reversed recapitulation. The ponticello interjection is not only texturally and harmonically interesting: it decorates the most emphatic cadence of the finale thus far, which serves to articulate a major juncture in the movement's form.

While some interpretations do not locate the point of recapitulation here, the rationales given for locating it elsewhere are relatively weak. Robert Anderson, for example, considers it to begin at the upbeat to 47:1, but it is difficult to agree with such a contention: the material which he supposes to be recapitulatory is haunted by the development's semiquaver fugato figure in the second violin, and there is no sense of strong tonal arrival; the music passes quickly through the distant key of F.¹⁶ Andrew Colton, by contrast, places the point of recapitulation at either 52:1 or 53:3, with the reintroduction of S1.¹⁷ While defensible, such a reading is insensitive to three crucial points:

- 1) As Ivor Keys points out, the marked 'near stillness' of the music at 49:1 communicates powerfully the idea of a structural re-beginning:¹⁸ it is as if the cyclical recurrence of the movement's introductory materials here emerges out of the dying embers left by the blaze of the development.
- 2) Colton's reading does not register the fact that S2 returns at 49:6. That the order of S-group materials in the recapitulation should be reversed marries well with the reversal of the order of the exposition as a whole.

¹⁶ Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), p. 385.

¹⁷ Andrew Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style' (Ph.D. dissertation, The Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1995), p. 59.

¹⁸ Ivor Keys, "'Ghostly Stuff': The Brinkwells Music' in *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature*, ed. Raymond Monk [Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993], pp. 108–120, at p. 115.

- 3) Colton's reading does not address the *structural* importance of the ponticello passage, which is not just a special effect: it forms part of the movement's strongest cadence. Indeed, it is the only cadence to feature a descending fifth in the bass, but it also captures, *in nuce*, one of the defining features of the movement as a whole: namely, the relationship between diatonic cadence and chromatic, tetrachordal voice leading.

The above recognition of both the ponticello interjection's formal significance and its relationship to earlier, *diatonic* cadences, which is foregrounded (ironically) by the Cohn-inspired voice-leading graphs given as Figures 1.2 and 1.3, has important ramifications for the debate this case study stages between Cohnian and Kurthian conceptions of chromatic, tetrachordal voice leading. It appears that local octatonicism might be said to be subordinate to various diatonic pillars and that these in turn generate the tonal scaffolding of Elgar's sonata-form argument in this movement. The next section looks to explore this Kurthian argument in more detail by examining both the individual principal cadences and the general harmonic trajectory of the exposition as a whole.

§1.1.2 A Kurthian reading

The finale's opening two bars provide the basic harmonic and motivic ideas out of which much of the rest of the finale's argument is generated (see Example 1.3). In prospect, the opening bar (plus the anacrusis) might be thought to graduate through three different chords: namely VI, iv, and ii⁰⁷ of E minor. In retrospect, however, it can be heard to spell out a half-diminished seventh rooted on f[#] in two-part counterpoint by means of a sustained E in the upper voice and a descending arpeggiation from C₄ to F[#] in the lower. (Note that the F[#] on the third beat of the bar is not only the lowest note, but it is also the only note in the lower part to receive quaver articulation *and* neighbour-note decoration, which makes it possible to hear it as both the goal and the harmonic anchor of the passage.) Not only in terms of its articulation (i.e. repeated quavers as opposed to semiquavers) but also of its metrical placement (i.e. the beginning of each crotchet beat), E³ is the note most clearly spotlighted for the listener. While also being the root of the movement's tonic, its

quality in this context as a natural seventh above a diminished triad foreshadows the tetrachordal harmonic syntax which will prove so pivotal at moments of cadence in the exposition and the development. Elgar plays on the polysemy of seventh chords throughout the movement, however, treating them both as irreducible tetrachords with a proclivity for smooth, chromatic voice leading *and* as extensions of (or substitutions for) consonant triads: the opening $ii^{\#07}/e$ chord, for example, can be parsed as an extended iv chord with an under third, which seems a plausible interpretation in light of the later modulation to $IV_{\#3}$ for the secondary-theme group, which would otherwise appear unmotivated. The second bar foreshadows the joining together of E minor and C major as a tonal pair in the primary theme group through its $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ voice leading in the alto voice (see Example 1.3). Later in the *Allegro molto*, either triad of this tonal pair can be substituted for the other at points of resolution (i.e. a virtual tonic can be instantiated by two different, closely related chords) and some of the tetrachords immanent to their respective diatonic collections (i.e. vii^{07} or $V7/C$ and $V7/e$) transform into one another through chromatic voice leading, so as to consolidate a link between two closely related diatonic harmonic areas, rather than as a syntactically separate means of implying no tonal centre at all.

Allegro molto.

senza sord. $ii^{\#07}$ $i^{\#5}$ 6 5

Example 1.3: rehearsal figures -1-2

The initial A section of P's small ternary form (i.e. P: A-B-A') further develops the $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ voice leading of the introduction's second bar, both by rhythmically augmenting it so that it now appears at a middleground rather than a surface level and by lifting it into the upper voice (see Figure 1.4). It is counterpointed with a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent in the

alto. The emergent importance of tonal pairing in the movement is further consolidated by the resolution of the $ii^{06/5}$ chord from 38:1 (beats 1 and 2). It functions as an altered subdominant in a plagal cadence in E minor, albeit that the fifth of the expected tonic at 38:1 (beat 3) is nudged up a semitone so as to produce C major 6/3. VI stands in for i.

Figure 1.4: voice-leading reduction, -:1-38:4

The transitional passage between 38:9 and 39:1, which links the A and B sections of P, might be broken into two distinct parts, organised by different harmonic syntaxes. To begin with the first of these, leaps of a fifth in Violin 1, decorated with lower neighbour notes, imply a triadic sequence (i.e. a cycle of fifths) between 38:9 and 10, albeit the accompanying harmonisation in the quartet's lower voices is sometimes ambiguous (see Example 1.4). B_b acquires an under third at 38:10 and the E_b chord that is anticipated on the third beat of the bar as the next fifth down in the sequence is similarly harmonised with an under third, although it has both its third and its fifth flattened(!) A diatonic cycle of fifths seems to become progressively corrupted by extensions and chromaticism. Between 38:11 and 13, by contrast, g^{07} moves to D_b7 via $O^{4(3)}$ voice-leading motion in Octatonic Pool 1. This change to a more explicitly tetrachordal syntax is marked out by a reduction in harmonic rhythm (i.e. two rather than four chords per bar), an attenuation of the instrumental texture (observe the introduction of rests in the second violin, viola, and cello parts), and staccato articulation. An $O^{6(+)}$ transformation then takes D_b7 to $G7$ between 38:13 and 39:1; the latter chord resolves to C major as part of a VI: IAC on the third beat of 39:1. This marks the exposition's first and only root-position cadence.

38:9

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

vii°/e Cycle of 5ths: vii°/C C vii°/F F Bb/G e°/C

39

Octatonic voice leading: g^7 $O^4(3)$ D_b^3 $O^4(3)$ g^7 $O^4(3)$ D_b^3 $O^4(3)$ g^7 $O^4(3)$ D_b^3

Octatonic Pool 1

[C(VI/e)] V₇ I (IAC)

Example 1.4: rehearsal figures 38:9–39:1

However, these seemingly distinct parts of the transition, which are based on fifth-based sequential repetition and octatonic transformation, respectively, can also be heard mutually to fill out one and the same diatonic tonal gesture. As shown in Figure 1.5, the root of C major's dominant is secured at 38:9 by a third progression in the bass (i.e. E–F#–G) and is subsequently prolonged, both by the decorated resolution of a cadential 6/4 at 38:10 and the octave coupling at 38:11; the terminal note of the latter is decorated by chromatic neighbour-note motion (i.e. G–A_b–G). This passage might be thought to function almost like a dominant lock. Rather than describing the c^{O7} chord at 38:10 as a distended E_b triad with an under third, it might be heard instead to function as a prolongational iv^{O7}/v . Similarly, the $D_b^4/3$ chord can be interpreted both as a tritone substitute for G^7 (in which case it has dominant function) or as a German Sixth of C (in which case it has subdominant function, owing to the Phrygian-cadence-like semitone motion in the bass). Either way, it is

prolongational.¹⁹ The passage in question might utilise both sequential (and thus typically non-cadential) fragmentation as well as smooth, chromatic voice leading between seventh chords, but it is still manifestly tonal.

Figure 1.5: voice-leading reduction, 38:4–39:1

The G7 at 39:1 discharges itself by fifth to C major at the beginning of P: B (see Figure 1.6). This contrasting middle uses chromatic voice leading to connect seventh chords which imply e and C as tonal centres.²⁰ The music between 39:5 and 6, for example, moves from b^{07} (i.e. vii^{07}/C) to B7 (i.e. $V7/e$) through $O^{2(3)}$ voice leading in Octatonic Pool 2. This produces the exposition's second IAC. Far from sidestepping tonality, this progression serves to intensify chromatically the paired relationship between E minor and C major, which was instantiated diatonically by the $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ voice leading of the finale's second bar. In this respect, however, the small-ternary form of the Allegro molto's primary theme is highly unusual: both of its principal cadences occur in the contrasting middle, rather than in the initial statement or its repetition. In other words, more structural weight appears to be given to a typically weaker part of the form.

¹⁹ A tritone substitute re-harmonises the most important chord tones of a dominant (namely, its third and its seventh, or F and B/C \flat in this instance), while helping to create a smooth chromatic bass line (e.g. A \flat to G).

²⁰ I refrain from describing this relationship as hexatonic because, although E minor and C major are arguably related by a leading-tone transformation, the finale is free of the characteristic chromatic-mediant relationships which hexatonic analyses render so neatly; the relationship between E minor and C major (as triads) is plainly diatonic in this movement, even if the cadences by which they are each tonicised are chromatically embellished. See Case Study 1.3 for an analysis of the Romance from Elgar's Violin Sonata which invokes the idea of hexatonicism.

39:1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8-910
11 12 14
15-1740:1
2

C a F d E: V⁷ I⁶ V₃⁴ V⁷/VI VI E: ii⁶ VI⁶ i

Diatonically adjusted 3rd sequence (in C) IAC Paired cadence Chromatic 3rd sequence Contrapuntal cadence

Figure 1.6: voice-leading reduction, 39:1–40:2

The close relationship between subdominant and tonic, implied by the resolution of $f\sharp^{07}$ to e at the beginning of the Allegro molto, appears to be consolidated when Elgar modulates to the subdominant major for S1 at 43:1 (see Figure 1.7). The antecedent phrase of its loosely periodic structure articulates a IV: HC/V, which is prepared once again by tetrachordal voice leading. The opening A major tonic is coloured by a natural seventh and voice leads to $d\sharp^{07}$ via an $O^{4(3)}$ transformation, which marks the traversal of Octatonic Pool 3. The latter chord functions as a substitute V/V (i.e. V/V), which is prolonged by an ascending third progression (i.e. $D\sharp-E-F\sharp$) in the bass to $V^{6/4}/V$. While dominant half cadences are weaker than tonic half cadences and tonic V–I motions, they still strongly denote tonality. Furthermore, this is the closest the secondary theme group comes to a clearly articulated cadence: S1’s consequent manages only to produce a weak subdominant-functioning progression (i.e. $IVpL-I\sharp 7$), in which the tonic portion of the cadence is prolonged by a double voice exchange and two $O^{3(+)}$ transformations.²¹

²¹ p stands for ‘parallel transformation’ (i.e. a change of mode within the same harmony); L stands for leading-tone transformation (i.e. the root of a major triad descends a semitone to its leading tone, while the fifth of a minor triad is raised by a semitone). Different cases represent different modes: lower-case letters indicate a transformation from a major to a minor triad, while upper-case letters indicate a transformation from a minor to a major triad. For a further example of a double voice exchange which prolongs an outer tonic and an inner, dissonant harmony, see Forte and Gilbert’s analysis of Mozart’s Piano Sonata in D major, K. 576, II in their *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982), p. 113, Example 116.

43:1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9 10 44:1

Octatonic Pool 3 **Diminished Spider 3**

A₄₇ O⁴⁽³⁾ d^{#7} A₅⁶ O³⁽⁺⁾ C₇

3 Antecedent 2 // Consequent 3

3-prg A₄₅⁶ C₇ C₂⁴ A₄₇⁷ O₃₍₊₎

I ——— $\frac{4}{b3}$ V/V VII_{b3}⁴⁵ V₄⁶ Ger⁶ V_{4/V}⁶ vii⁹⁴₂ V₄⁶ ——— $\frac{4}{2}$ I_{b3}⁶ bII_{b3}⁶ I_{b3}⁷

V: HC Plagal cadence: IVpL -> I

Figure 1.7: voice-leading reduction, 43:1–44:1

Viewed as a whole, the exposition completes a clockwise rotation through tetrachordal pitch space's three octatonic pools as a by-product of its cadences in C, e, and A, respectively. Despite its potential for articulating a syntax that is separate from diatonicism, chromatic movement between sevenths is marshalled for tonal ends. Perhaps the octatonic–polar progression at the end of the development, which seems temporarily to jettison any feeling of diatonic progression due to its proliferation of dissonant, octatonic–polar relationships, might be thought to unlock the true potential of voice leading free of ties with conventional tonality. However, as already intimated, if one places this passage back in its immediate voice-leading context, it becomes apparent that the ponticello interjection similarly functions as part of an expanded cadence in which harmonic functions associated with e and C are blended (see Figure 1.8).

48:8 9 10 11 49:1

Octatonic polar 'prolongation'

Pool 1	Pool 3	Pool 2	Pool 1
$e \overset{\text{e}6}{3}$	$C\# \overset{\text{c}4}{3}$	$f\# \overset{\text{f}6}{3}$	$D\# \overset{\text{d}4}{3}$
$g \overset{\text{g}6}{3}$	$E\# \overset{\text{e}4}{3}$	$a\# \overset{\text{a}6}{3}$	$G \overset{\text{g}4}{3}$

e and C
interchangeable
(5-6 voice leading)

implied coupling

e:	$V \overset{\text{e}6}{3}$	$I \overset{\text{e}6}{5}$		V_7/iL	iL
C:	V/v	$v \overset{\text{c}4}{5}$	→ $\overset{\text{c}4}{3}$	V^7	I

Paired structural cadence (combined dominant functions of e and C connected by octatonicism)

Figure 1.8: voice-leading reduction, 48:8–49:1

The first time the dominant of E minor appears in the development is at 48:8. However, it is voiced in a weak $4/3$ inversion; its bass note resolves contrapuntally up to $G\sharp$. The resultant chord at 48:9, which initiates the octatonic–polar progression, is ambiguous: it can be interpreted either as a corrupted version of the tonic with a flattened fifth and a natural seventh, or as a G minor 6 chord (in which case $V^{4/3}/e$ becomes a sort of pre-dominant in C). The $G\sharp$ root of this harmonically bivalent chord is then ‘prolonged’ by an ascending chromatic line, which culminates in a G^7 chord (i.e. V/VI) at 48:11, beat 4. Taken as a whole, the passage might be heard to transform a minor-mode dominant sixth into a major-mode dominant seventh through chromatic voice leading which composes out an implied octave coupling in the bass. Far from pulling tonality apart at its seams, the inherent dissonance of the relevant octatonic poles serves merely to intensify the moment of diatonic resolution, which is elided with the return of introductory material at 49:1 for the beginning of the recapitulation proper. Contra Cohn, the structural pillars of this middleground cadence are of paramount importance to the passage’s meaning; they are not a secondary by-product of chromatic voice-leading motion. Indeed, while Cohn’s graphic amalgamation of diminished spiders and octatonic pools renders the moment-to-moment logic of Elgar’s tetrachordal voice leading with great precision, it might be said that Kurth’s concept of structural pillars better captures the overall functional *meaning* of this progression.

On the face of it, Elgar's tendency to let the decentred and 'strangely sinister' world of chromaticism be absolved in the purity of diatonicism might be considered to have provided the early twentieth-century listener with succour. One can sample the transgressive thrills of the chromatic universe while keeping one's feet firmly anchored in well-to-do diatonicism; the arrival of modernism in Britain's concert halls did not necessitate the extinction of the musical past. However, there is a darker way to read the meaning of the octatonic–polar passage. As Harper-Scott observes in relation to Schubert's music, chromaticism can sometimes be used by a composer to 'conceal the functioning of tonality' and to make pitch space thus 'feel capacious [and] "free"'.²² By enmeshing the tetrachordal voice leading which characterises the octatonic–polar passage so tightly within the movement's cadential architecture, Elgar is conceding that no escape from tonality is possible for movements that accept its precepts as part of their compositional strategy. There can be no middle way: either tonality is entirely repudiated or one remains completely under its control. Furthermore, if there is something disturbing conveyed by the ponticello interjection, then its message runs through the summer tonality of the rest of the movement, too: diatonicism provides no guarantee of a less complicated world.

§1.1.3 Some concluding remarks on Cohn's concept of code switching

Despite its diminutive size, the two-bar ponticello interjection from the finale of Elgar's String Quartet has proved to be a useful vehicle with which to explore a much larger theoretical problem. Cohn's abstract and formalist explanation of tetrachordal syntax, outlined at the beginning of this case study, provides an incredibly useful model for coming to terms with particular kinds of chromatic progression. However, I have argued that it would be a mistake to suggest that these progressions are consequently 'atonal' (as Cohn does) because they adhere to a different syntax from that of triadic diatonicism.²³ Cohn's model is designed to map smooth, chromatic transformations in a neutral voice-leading environment, in which there is no diatonic interference, but the finale of Elgar's String Quartet is dependent on such interference for much of its effect. Tetrachordal chromaticism is often used to fill out the

²² Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 244.

²³ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 208.

contrapuntal architecture of that which might otherwise be described as an expanded diatonic cadence, for example. In light of this, 'atonal' appears to be a somewhat inappropriate label.

In an attempt to account for interactions between different harmonic syntaxes, Cohn suggests that listeners have the facility to swap between chromatic and diatonic codes in much the same way that bilingual people can switch between different languages without conscious delay or effort. He maintains that it is only an ideological commitment to ideas of unity that makes us disinclined to talk about pieces of music being organised by two different harmonic systems, as this would imply that they are not organic wholes. On the subject of unity, though, it is worth pursuing further one of the linguistic examples Cohn uses to preface the idea of musical 'code switching'. He writes that 'on a hot summer day in Alsace, Gardner-Chloros [a professor of applied linguistics] recorded an office worker complaining on the phone about a malfunctioning air-handling system. "The whole extract was delivered at high speed and the fifteen or so switches [between French and Alsatian] in no way interrupt the flow."²⁴ Cohn goes on to suggest that musical listeners too might be able to switch between different codes without noticing. However, it is important to note that, whichever language was being used at any particular point in the conversation, the overriding purpose of the office worker's phone call remained the same throughout: he or she wanted the air-handling system fixed. Code switching, in other words, did not obscure the overall meaning of the communicated message. This case study has sought to demonstrate something similar: there might indeed be changes from diatonic and triadic to chromatic and tetrachordal 'languages' in the *Allegro molto*, but they often contribute to the formation of the same tonal 'message'. While a phone conversation using different languages might still be orientated by the same practical goal, so might musical passages using a variety of different harmonies and voice-leading types be orientated by the same tonic. Much as an Alsatian word might crop up in a French sentence, octatonic chromaticism is often imbued with diatonic function, by virtue of its inclusion within a cadential unit. Tonality, or the perception of centricity in music, in other words, can be instantiated by more than one type of harmony or voice leading.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 202.

Case Study 1.2:
Middleground diminished-seventh bass arpeggiation
(String Quartet, Allegro moderato)

vii ³/₄/V V i

6 ——— 5
 ♯3 ♯3

V I₃

Example 1.5: Elgar, String Quartet, Op. 83, 1st movement, 17:9–11

To understand the tonality of the Allegro moderato, it is useful to begin with its final auxiliary cadence (see Example 1.5), which follows the liquidation of the movement's introductory two-bar idea between 17:5 and 8 (compare with 0:1 to 2). It emerges as if from another world, thickly scored, *più lento*, and *forte*, after both a *piano* hush and a textural reduction to a single B in the first violin part. It is seemingly composed of a hitherto unheard cadential idea. V is tonicised by a pre-dominant diminished seventh chord which blends together subdominant and dominant functions: the two violins emphasise V/V-ness by intoning $\hat{7}$ and $\hat{2}$ of B major's diatonic collection, while the $\flat\hat{6}$ and $\hat{4}$ sounded respectively in the viola and the cello express iv/V-ness.²⁵ As Daniel Harrison has observed, which of these chord functions wins out as the most keenly experienced by a listener is often dependent on the ways in which a composer chooses to voice and to resolve the relevant chords, although 'the sense of mixture and of competition is never really lost'.²⁶ In this instance, the leading tone of the dominant's

²⁵ On functional mixture see Daniel Harrison, *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music: A Renewed Dualist Theory and an Account of its Precedents* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), pp. 64–70.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

scale (i.e. A \sharp) in violin two resolves downwards, to A \flat , instead of upwards, to B. While this still counts as a chord tone of V7 in the key of E minor, the resultant slippage negates the upwardly resolving kinetic energy immanent in strong dominant function. The subdominant leading tone in the viola ($\flat\hat{6}$, G), by contrast, discharges itself normatively to $\hat{5}$ (F \sharp), and the subdominant root in the cello falls a plagal-sounding fourth to the root of V (E to B). Subdominant function seems to predominate.

V then moves to i. Although the dominant's seventh (i.e. A \flat) resolves upwards (rather than downwards) in the second violin, the quality of its resolution is otherwise normative. The slight out-of-phase-ness of the bass with the remaining voices in this cadence does little to cloud its tonal import, despite the resultant mirage-like shimmer, which implies a sense of distance.

As part of what seems like an afterthought, E minor is transformed into C major through a $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{6}$ voice-leading motion on the second beat of the penultimate bar. The latter chord proceeds to resolve back to E *major* via an IP transformation, thereby producing a hexatonic Tierce-de-Picardie effect. There is a sense in which the movement's final two bars might be heard to express nothing but tonic function and therefore to be quite straightforward: E minor yields almost seamlessly to C major through having its fifth displaced upwards by a semitone; the latter chord is merely a substitute for the former. However, other hearings are possible. C major can be thought to relate to the preceding E minor chord as a iv6/3 harmony, modified by a relative transformation (i.e. A–G \flat). Subdominant-functioning entities can either prolong a tonic themselves or suggest a movement away from it as part of the predominant portion of a cadence. In this case, C major might be heard not only as a substitute for the tonic, but also as an altered subdominant that is *on its way* to a dominant. Despite its ostensible simplicity, it can be made to yield different tonal significations.

The moment of harmonic arrival on E major is itself subtly sabotaged. Firstly, the pseudo-tonicisations implied by the semitonal resolutions from G \flat to G \sharp in both violins and from C to B in the viola are separated out from one another by a short silence, indicated in the score by commas in all four parts. This greatly diminishes the feeling of resolution. Secondly, the tonic is voiced in second inversion. For a brief moment, it can be heard as a V6/4 chord to which the preceding C major relates as

♯VI (i.e. as a voice-leading substitute for a iv6/3 pre-dominant in E *major*), but $\hat{5}$ soon falls to $\hat{1}$ in the cello, which confirms the chord's fundamental tonicity. This descending bass motion might be heard to function as a synecdoche for another cadential close. However, it is also possible to argue that the relevant B is ultimately an inner-voice tone: it is sustained as part of a double-stopped chord in the cello in the final bar, which means that there is no actual descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ in the bass. It is as if the volume of the chord's acoustic root is momentarily turned down to nothing in the mix until the very last bar, while its upper partials are retained throughout.

In the space of only three bars, then, we are presented with three separate resolutions: one auxiliary, one chromatic-tertiary, and the other synecdochic. The latter two are plagued by ambiguities. Elgar seems to imply that, post-emancipation of dissonance and post-war, the affirmation signified by a perfect cadence must be isolated from the musical argument which gave rise to it, almost as if it were in inverted commas, and its message clarified and repeated by other means. Each proceeding close comes to seem more cryptic and more provisional. Are such gestures genuinely functional or are they mere vestiges of a broken system which cannot be made to sound natural, whole, or inevitable any longer? The unmotivated and seemingly archaic switch to the movement's only major-mode tonic at its end – an allusion to the Baroque Tierce di Picardie – suggests that such resolutions are possible now only in a past that is quite different both from Elgar's 1918 present and from our own time. Elgar described the movement as beginning 'in rather a phantom-like way'; it might be said to end in much the same vein.²⁷

§1.2.1 Foregrounds

The auxiliary cadence presented at the beginning of this case study encapsulates the tonality of the *Allegro moderato* in a nutshell. In order to demonstrate that both this local event and the movement's *Ursatz* compose out the same cadential idea (albeit at different structural levels) it is necessary to examine each of the movement's principal tonicisations in turn.

²⁷ Edward Elgar, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime*, ed. Jerrold Northrop Moore (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 457.

Figure 1.9 presents a middleground reduction of the opening four-bar introduction and of P. The introduction's opening tonic is juxtaposed with chord $\sharp VII$ at 0:1. The root of the latter is taken down the octave as part of a bass arpeggiation, which produces a half-cadential close to a minor-mode dominant $6/3$ chord at 0:2. Daniel Grimley interprets this as 'a curiously formal and archaic threshold'.²⁸ While this particular modal $D\sharp$ is quickly revealed to function as a chromatic neighbour to the dominant's 'real' major third in an inner voice at 0:3, the $\sharp 7$ scale degree, which it instantiates, soon penetrates to a deeper level of structure. It negates the $\sharp 7$ established at 1:1 in the upper voice, for example, and similarly disrupts the expectation of strong dominant arrival at 2:7 after the substantial prolongation of $II_{\sharp 3}7$ from 2:1. However, these three closes – namely, a i : HC, a V : IAC and a contrapuntal $F\sharp-G$ resolution to $i6/3$ at 0:2, 1:1, and 3:1, respectively – serve to compose out a third progression in the bass (counterpointed with an $\hat{8}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ motion in the upper voice) which sets up the perfect-authentic cadential progression between 3:1 and 6. Archaic colouration is merely a surface-level feature; it does nothing to undermine P's straightforwardly articulated E minor tonality.

Figure 1.9: voice-leading reduction, 0:1–3:6

S is far less straightforward (see Figure 1.10). The introductory two bars from the beginning of the movement are cyclically repeated at 3:6 to 7. However, rather than the bass $D\sharp$ functioning as a lower-neighbour to the tonic, which is then taken down

²⁸ Grimley, 'The chamber music and works for strings', p. 132.

the octave as part of a tonic half cadence (as between 0:1 and 3), E now resolves as a neighbour to the fifth of a G major arpeggiation. Despite the resultant harmonic arrival on what initially appears to be a III *Stufe* at 4:1, an E is retained as a dissonant sixth in the first violin (the product of a reaching-over motion from an inner voice); the tonic refuses completely to sink below the horizon.²⁹ No further tonicisation of this major-mediant key occurs and the music gives over to a linear intervallic pattern of consecutive, descending sixths. The resultant harmonies (namely D major, C major, and B minor) seem to suggest E minor more than they do G major; an assumption that P and S will follow a conventional i–III key trajectory is undermined from the beginning of rehearsal figure 4, on account of the persistence of i-ness into S-space.

A voice exchange between 4:5 and 8 prolongs a local G major tonic, which is then converted (on the third beat of 4:8) into a leading-tone diminished-seventh chord of C7. The latter harmony clearly functions as a pre-dominant in a putative B \flat cadence between 5:1 and 5 (i.e. vii^{o7}/V/V/B \flat). Its close voice-leading relationship to the G6/5 sonority that preceded it allows us (retrospectively) to interpret this earlier dissonant sixth chord, not as an ultimately ‘stable’ III/e, whose harmonic content is subtly blended with that of the movement’s global tonic, but rather as an onwards-driving dominant function in B \flat (V^{6/5/3}/V/V).

While the reduction to a *pianissimo* dynamic at 5:1 seems to stress that we have entered a supposedly distant harmonic area, the suggested tonicisation of B \flat in this passage is more convincing than the earlier attempt to establish G major. Because of the lucidity of the II \flat ₃7–V7–I contrapuntal framework in which it takes place, the substitution of a B \flat tonic root for a replacement B \natural at 5:5 does not totally undermine the anticipated cadence: b^{o7} still projects tonic function, albeit weakly. Ironically, this dissonant emphasis serves to mark out the absent B \flat as a nearly achieved harmonic goal: without it, the A \flat in the viola would have made it sound like yet another dominant-seventh in a free-falling chain of descending fifths.

²⁹ I borrow the metaphor from Donald F. Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis: Symphonies and Other Orchestral Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 12.

Violin I: e, d, c, b (reaching over)
 Violin II: g, f#, e (reaching over); part of inner voice tenth descent (G - E) between 3:7 and 4:5

3:6 7 4:1 2 3 4 5 8 5:1 2 3 4 5

e: 8 8 Building to $\flat V$ EEC?(!) 8 9 9

G (III): vi V I₃⁶ I₃⁴ I₃⁶
 Elided medial caesura
 e (i): I₃⁶ VII₃⁶ VI₃⁶ V₃⁶
 vii₃⁴/V

I₃⁶ III₃⁶
 B \flat : V₃⁶/II II₃⁶₄⁴
 (♭V) vii₃⁷/II

V Deceptive EEC $\sharp b^7$ (substitution)

Figure 1.10: voice-leading reduction, 3:6–5:5

Despite its ultimately deceptive quality, this resolution is so far the only reasonable candidate for the essential expositional cadence (EEC); the earlier close in G major at 4:1 is elided with the beginning of S, which would entail that the entirety of the secondary theme area would be a closing zone (if one were to adopt Hepokoski's and Darcy's parlance).³⁰ A potential harmonic problem is thus established: an almost-achieved tonicisation of $\flat V$ is presented in place of a more conventional V: EEC, which would have completed the middleground arpeggiation initially suggested by the exposition's implied P (i) → S (III) trajectory; the B \flat in the bass at 5:5 even provides an allusion to the key to which the music *should* have gone. Perhaps the remainder of the exposition will right this tonal wrong.

A repetition of the first part of S between 6:1 and 3 might be thought to suggest a return to more conventional harmony (see Example 1.6). Violin one's E is a genuine upper voice tone, which is harmonised by a stable E minor 6/3 chord; it is no longer a dissonant by-product of reaching over from an inner voice. A descending fourth progression in the bass takes this tonic (at long last) to its minor-mode dominant on the first beat of 6:3; the latter chord eventually becomes major as a result

³⁰ It might be interpreted more profitably as an elided medial caesura. In Chapter 2, I seek to defend the application of Sonata Theory concepts such as these to music which does not follow a normative sonata-form design, through the study of Elgar's own engagement with both the theory textbooks and canonical repertoires of his day.

of the middleground semitonal ascent to D \sharp in the bass at 7:1. This marks the (seemingly normative) beginning of the development on an active dominant.³¹

6

7

deceptive cadence deceptive cadence V/V

negated cadence V6 ii7 V6 iv6

Example 1.6: rehearsal figures 6:1–7:1

However, such a reading requires us to bracket out important surface details. For example, the proposed middleground connection between the two respective V chords at 6:3 (beat 1) and 7:1 is complicated by the interpolation of G major material

³¹ One might also consider the music between 7:1 and 8:1 to be a P-based closing zone, which prepares the development proper at 8:1. However, the attenuation of instrumental texture in the bar before rehearsal figure 7, the deeply unsettled nature of the harmonic material that follows on from it, as well as the absence of an established cadence from which the music at 7:1 proceeds, suggest that this P-based passage is ultimately more developmental in character.

between 6:3 (beat 3) and 6, which serves to make the harmonic function of the latter dominant ambiguous. A series of descending, consecutive sixths, beginning at 6:1, culminates in a first-inversion A major chord on the final beat of 6:3, which sounds like a secondary dominant in G. After numerous deceptive resolutions (see the first beats of 6:4 and 5), it appears finally to resolve to a descending arpeggiation of D major at 6:6, as V/III, but the expected resolution to D's fundamental at 7:1 is thwarted by an arrival on B major 6/3; D \flat is replaced by D \sharp in the bass, just as B \flat was replaced by B \natural at 5:5.

While the deceptive cadence in B \flat left behind a strong sense of the key that was being evaded, the move from D major to B major appears to shut down the possibility of resolution to both E minor *and* G major, despite the suggestive and sustained quasi-cadential build-up throughout rehearsal figure 6. This is for two interconnected reasons: 1) Diatonically speaking, B major is distantly related both to the expected D major sonority it replaces at 7:1 and to the G major tonal centre which that anticipated D major chord had implied;³² and 2) the strong dominant function suggested by the D major chord at 6:6 makes the subsequent B major chord sound like an aberrant tonic G major, as opposed to a dominant of the global tonic. As if in acknowledgment of this functional ambiguity, the apparent V6/3–i6/4 progression in the global tonic at 7:1 comes to sound more like a weak [vi/G: V6/3–iv6/4] or even [G: III6/3–ii6/4] motion. This is not only on account of its unorthodox harmonic preparation, but of both its form-functionally redundant repetition at 7:2 and of the failure of violins one and two to resolve their As to the third of E. If the triads of E minor and G major are blended together effortlessly by the 6/5/3 chord at 4:1, then the music at 7:1 highlights the manner in which their most closely associated harmonies (i.e. their respective dominants) can disrupt one another's projected resolutions.

If one chose not to worry so much about tonal implication, then one could map this change from D-major expectation to B-major reality, as well as the unsettled musical progression which follows on from it, on to a neo-Riemannian *Tonnetz* (see

³² The former chord displaces two of the latter's constituent notes by a major second and a minor second, respectively (A to B and D \flat to D \sharp), while retaining only its third (F \sharp). B \flat 7 and b $^{\circ 7}$, by contrast, are related by the displacement of a single semitone (B \flat to B \natural): smooth voice leading helps to ameliorate diatonic distance.

Figure 1.11). The quartet traverse an octatonic alley in a north-westerly direction through a series of three consecutive rP transformations between 6:6 and 7:7; F major is then used as a pivot to change voice-leading lane so that a hexatonic alley might be explored via pL transformations before parking on C# at 8:9. Perhaps this passage is non-tonal: it does not prolong any particular harmony, but rather explores the harmonic possibilities opened up by smooth voice leading.

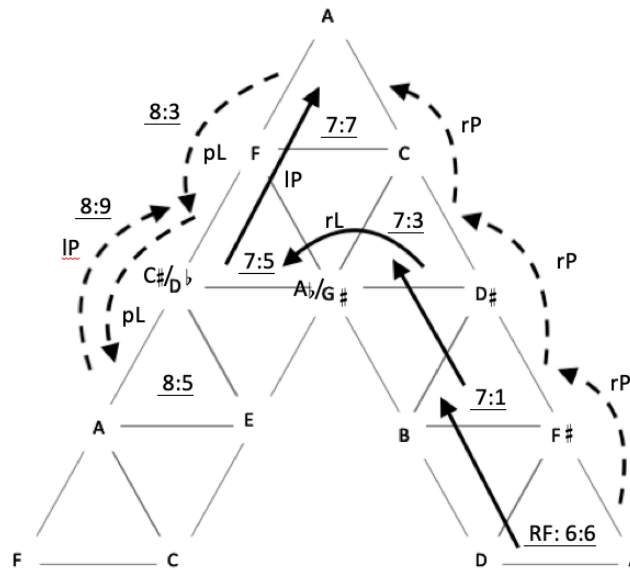


Figure 1.11: Octatonic Corridor, Hexatonic Alley, 6:6–8:9

If one were to think about the passage in more explicitly tonal terms, however, the bass $G\sharp$ at 6:1 can be interpreted not as a $6/3$ tonic *Stufe*, but rather as a lower neighbour to the $G\sharp$ chord at 7:3 (see Figure 1.12), to which the unexpected B major chord at 7:1 relates as $\sharp III$. Crucially, $G\sharp$, F, and $C\sharp$ all receive tonicisations as well as appearing as part of a broader middleground arpeggiation of $C\sharp$ major, whereas G major and B major are merely contrapuntal and ephemeral. The neo-Riemannian *Tonnetz* implies a structural weight for the latter chords which they do not possess.

6:1 7:1 7:3 7:7 8:1 8:2 8:3

Hints at tonicization (upper voice): V/G# G# V/F F

C#: VII⁶/V III II I V III₄₃ vii⁷/III III₄₃ I₃ V₃ I

Figure 1.12: voice-leading reduction, 6:1–8:2

That said, the neo-Riemannian reading of the music between 8:3 and 9 in Figure 1.11 does not appear to be in tension with the surface-level voice leading sketched in Figure 1.13. Whether or not transformations of this kind have tonal function is a question I shall defer until the third case study of this chapter. For now, it is sufficient merely to note that it is C# which appears to be the most important middleground pillar: it is supported by a relatively deep-level arpeggiation and it is the harmony which is most often returned to at both the beginning and the end points of the development's various thematic processes. The tonal meaning of this C# *Stufe* will be discussed later, after I have demonstrated its central role in the remainder of the development.

8:1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5 (C) ————— 6 (D_b) ————— 5 (E) ————— 6 (F⁶)
 5 (G#) ————— 6 (A)

F b b e_b A_b D_b O³(3) PrP PrP d B₇ e

F pL C# pL A₇ Lp C#₇

Figure 1.13: voice-leading reduction, 8:1–9

At 8:8 (beat 3), for example, Elgar engages in a sequence of alternating O⁴(³) and O³(⁴) voice-leading transformations, beginning on C# and culminating on F major at 9:1 (see Figure 1.14). He passes back to D_b (i.e. an enharmonically modified version of

C#) at 9:2 by means of a third progression in the bass, which is articulated by a cycle of fifths (see Figure 1.15). Harmonic arrival on the development's local tonic is quickly undermined, however, as a slip of a third in the bass produces D \flat 's relative – appended with a minor seventh – which is then transformed into a fully diminished tetrachord. This dissonant harmony is then transposed by ascending minor second until D \flat is once more regained at 10:1.

Figure 1.14: voice-leading reduction, 8:8–9:1

Figure 1.15: voice-leading reduction, 9:1–10:1

The root of a D \flat 6/3 chord is coupled down an octave from 10:1 to 4 (see Figure 1.16) before another slip of a minor third produces B \flat 4/2, which instigates a cycle of fifths, once again culminating in an arrival on D \flat at 10:8. At this point, the enharmonic seam is breached once more and D \flat becomes a C \sharp 7 chord, which resolves to II \flat 37/e. Being prolonged for some bars by an alternation between its stable chord form and its tritone substitute C7 (otherwise known as a German augmented sixth of V), this harmony finally resolves to V at 12:1. After such extended chromaticism and the lack of a properly tonicised dominant *Stufe* in the exposition, one might expect the

assertion of the global dominant here to be emphatic, but it is instead articulated in second inversion and in its minor mode. A question familiar to Schubert scholarship emerges: can this harmony, so fleetingly and weakly articulated, really be the structural locus of the movement's form? The bass F# of this V6/4 resolves upwards to the third of the tonic. Both because the quality of this cadence is weak and contrapuntal, and because of the disproportionate durations of F#7 and E minor, we might even hear the arrival on the supposed global tonic at 12:2 as an arrival on the subdominant of V.³³

Figure 1.16: voice-leading reduction, 10:1–12:2

The figure displays a voice-leading reduction of a musical passage. The top part shows the treble and bass staves with notes and accidentals. Below the staves, Roman numerals indicate the chords: I_6^b , V_6^b , I_6^b , rP , and VI_6^b . A 'Cycle of 5ths' diagram is shown below the numerals, starting with Db_6 and moving through Bb_6 , Eb_4 , Ab_4 , Db_4 , $C\#_2$, $F\#$, b_6 , and e_6 . The diagram is divided into two sections: 'Db: I6' and 'Cycle of 5ths: Bb6 4 Eb4 Ab4 Db4 C#2 F#'. The final section shows b_6 and e_6 .

Figure 1.16: voice-leading reduction, 10:1–12:2

An interpretative conundrum presents itself at this point in the form: should the development's 'prolongation' of C# be read in relation to the exposition's seat-of-the-pants 'orthodox' prolongation of E minor in the exposition (i-III-V); or to its nearly achieved 'wrong' prolongation of Bb (II-V-I)? Read as V/V/V, C# seems like a perfectly conventional harmony for a development key in an E minor sonata form and in practice, it *does* begin a cycle of fifths which closes to (an admittedly) weak tonic chord between 10:8 and 12:2. However, as the foregoing analysis of the exposition has shown, a conventionally orthodox middleground gesture, from which C# might draw its meaning, is absent: the suggested possibility of a i-III-V arpeggiation is intimated only weakly on the surface. In terms of middleground strength, the putative cadence

³³ Schubert also colours a recapitulatory tonic as a non-tonic chord in the first movement of his Piano Sonata in Bb, D. 960: see Nicholas Marston, 'Schubert's Homecoming' in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 125, No. 2 (2000): 248-270. While this harmonic ploy is both local and temporary in Schubert's case, I will later demonstrate that Elgar's subdominant-sounding E minor is of great structural significance.

in B \flat at 5:5 is far stronger, even despite the ultimate evasion of its final local tonic chord. Furthermore, C \sharp is related to B \flat by a root motion of a minor third, thus invoking and building on the chain of minor-third related harmonies established earlier in the movement (i.e. E minor, G major, B \flat major). The latter reading is more radical than the former and might therefore appear to be unlikely in prospect. It is left to the remainder of the movement (and the final auxiliary cadence with which this case study began, in particular) either to confirm or to deny such suspicions. Let us continue to work up to this moment in sequence.

The recapitulation sets about solving a problem that persisted throughout the exposition and the development: namely, whenever the dominant is tonicised, its mode is quickly changed to minor and the $\hat{7}$ leading tone (so essential to the articulation of an E minor tonality) is thus negated. At 12:6, it appears that this pattern is going to repeat itself (see the indicated parallel transformation in Figure 1.17). However, a whole-tone sequence carries the bass up a third to E \flat at 13:1 as part of a chromatic composing out of the dominant's missing major third. As if to convince us of the structural importance of this progression, Elgar repeats this B–C \sharp –E \flat progression at a deeper middleground level by means of a series of tonicisations between 12:6 and 14:6; its E \flat portion is marked *ppp* – the quietest dynamic marking in the whole piece – giving it special emphasis. From a structural voice-leading perspective, at least, it is strange that Anderson regarded the E \flat *Stufe*, articulated between 14:5 and 6, as being so *distant* from the tonic triad (no doubt both because of its enharmonic spelling and introspective dynamic, as well as the whole-tone progression which produces it), given that it is in fact responsible for restoring the dominant's potency.³⁴

³⁴ Anderson, *Elgar*, p. 384.

Figure 1.17: middleground graph, 12:2–17:9

At 15:6, what sounds like a descending arpeggiation in the dominant is played by the cello, but harmonic arrival on this *Stufe* is delayed until 16:4 (not shown in the graph); once again it is voiced in a weak 6/4 inversion that resolves upwards to $i^6/3$. The tonic-prolonging music from 16:5 to 17:4 is based on the two progressions graphed in Figure 1.18. Both offset the tonic principally through neighbour-note motions and there is no signal in either of an *Urlinie* descent in the upper voice, which remains static on $\hat{8}$. Despite the belligerent *ff* and *con fuoco* tone, a satisfactory resolution cannot be manifested; indeed, both the loud dynamics and the thickness of the texture here might be intended to compensate for exactly this failing. In the entirety of the recapitulation, there is only one strong cadential bass motion to a root-position tonic: namely, the auxiliary cadence at 17:9, with which this case study began.

Figure 1.18: voice-leading reduction, 16:5 & 17:2

§1.2.2 Structural Parallelisms: Auxiliary Cadence and *Ursatz*

In addition to closing the movement at a local level, I argue that the *Allegro moderato*'s final three bars (refer back to Example 1.5) help to solve the interpretative problem sketched above in §1.2.1, which centres on the two contradictory analytical positions detailed below:

1. The tonality of the movement is relatively conventional: the exposition is scaffolded by a weak middleground arpeggiation (i–III–V); the development then prolongs C \sharp as V/V/V, which returns us (via a cycle of fifths) to the tonic for the beginning of the recapitulation; the recapitulation composes out a structural V–I motion.
2. The tonality of the movement is decidedly unconventional: the exposition and the development compose out a chain of minor-third-related *Stufen* (namely, E minor, G major, B \flat major, C \sharp /D \flat major, E minor) at a middleground level; the recapitulation composes out a structural V–I motion.

The auxiliary cadence, I will claim, provides evidence in support of the second view; although if one were temporarily to ignore its intricacies, then one might be tempted to graph the exposition and the development as follows (see Figure 1.19 below). Beginning with a relatively normative middleground i–III progression between 0:1 and 4:1, the movement veers off unexpectedly and gestures toward a tonicisation of \flat V between 5:1 and 5. The dominant-rooted diminished-seventh chord established at 5:5 ($v_{\flat 5}$) averts this potential tonal disaster and completes the tonic middleground arpeggiation implied by P and S; it resolves to a first-inversion tonic at 6:1, after which a root-position tonic is established at 7:2. A cycle of fifths underpins the development, which ultimately produces the resolution back to the tonic at 12:2.

Figure 1.19: middleground graph, 0:1–12:2 (conventional)³⁵

However, as demonstrated in §1.2.1, this conventional reading distorts a number of the music’s features. Firstly, the stable III chord at 4:1 is appended with a dissonant sixth: from a voice-leading point of view, it is not a goal in itself but rather a predominant in an extended passage on B \flat . Secondly, it is difficult to hear the b $^{\circ}7$ chord at 5:5 as the dominant of E minor: in context, it sounds like a weakened version of a tonic B \flat . Thirdly, the build-up to this deceptive cadence is more suggestive of an EEC effect than any other event in the exposition: the music from 6:1 to 7:2 cannot easily be heard to compose out a cadence in E minor, as the B major 6/3 chord at 7:1 disrupts an expected cadence in G major (it cannot realistically be heard to relate to the first-inversion B minor chord at 6:3). Similarly, the resolution of B major 6/3 to E minor between 7:1 and 2, which is implied by Figure 1.19, is ultimately illusory: the ‘appoggiaturas’ in question never resolve; through repetition, the ‘tonic’ comes to sound like a weak A minor 6/4 chord. Fourthly, while the cycle-of-fifths argument for the development is compelling, it does not take into account the relative durational and prolongational weights of the harmonies between 7:3 and 12:2: C \sharp /D \flat is returned to and departed from more often than any other centre in the development; the other harmonies (particularly the final minor-mode dominant 6/4 chord) are far weaker.

³⁵ The $\hat{8}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ motion in the upper voice, highlighted at the beginning of this middleground voice-leading graph, is a structural parallelism of Violin 1’s opening melody in bars 1-2.

The apparent inadequacies of this conventional middleground interpretation, revealed by detailed analysis of surface events, make it necessary to search for an alternate reading, which makes more sense of the movement's idiosyncrasies. Despite its pronounced rhetorical separation, it can be argued that the Allegro moderato's final auxiliary cadence articulates the structure of the whole movement in miniature. Its final three chords (namely, $vii^{o4/3}/V-V-i$) present a telescoped version of the Allegro moderato's *Ursatz* (see Figure 1.20). The movement begins with a complete middleground arpeggiation of $vii^{o4/3}/V$ (E–G–B \flat –D \flat –E), which resolves to the dominant at 12:6; the tonic is finally secured at 17:9. (Although there is no literal B, *Stufe* at 5:5, it is the most stably implied harmony in the exposition, besides the opening E minor; its status is far less ambiguous than the G6/5 harmony at 4:1, which I have shown to function as a pre-dominant rather than as a stable harmonic centre.)

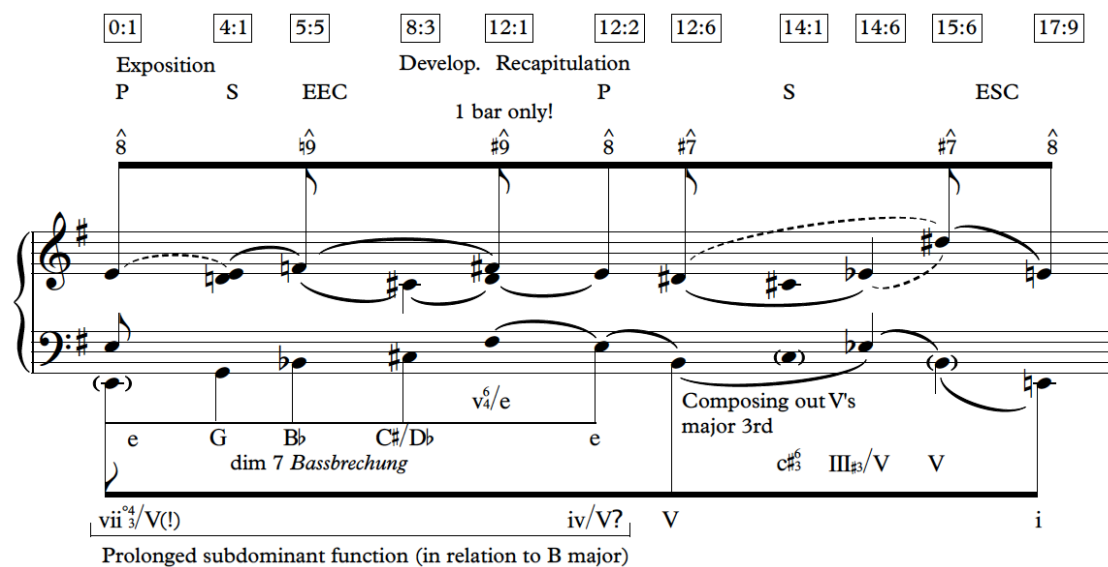


Figure 1.20: background graph, 0:1–17:9

A few words on the oddness of this graph are necessary. Rather than there being a structural descending line in the upper voice, $\hat{8}$ is prolonged by upper- and lower-neighbour notes; the movement's *Kopfton* is static.³⁶ For Heinrich Schenker, tonality is typically instantiated by a *Bassbrechung* and an *Urfinie* in conjunction with one

³⁶ Harper-Scott argued that the static *Kopfton* is an Elgarian fingerprint (*Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 [2006]), p. 94) although he has since come to recognise it as an 'unmistakably twentieth-century element', present in a broader range of repertoire: see 'Vaughan Williams's *Antic Symphony*' in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism, 1895–1960* (Ashgate, 2010), pp. 175–95, at p. 183.

another; in the *Allegro moderato*, only the former is present. The refusal of the fundamental line to descend indicates that the form is left open despite its ending.³⁷

More troubling, however, is the strange tension between structural levels which appears to be immanent in the graph. At a horizontal, middleground level, the bass Es at 0:1 and 12:2 mark the beginning and end points of the arpeggiation of a dissonant a# diminished seventh. At the level of the surface, by contrast, they function as roots of triadic, consonant entities. Of course, it is not unusual for the relative cardinalities of the foreground and the middleground not to match one another. A foreground V7 can happily prolong a middleground I, for example. However, such discrepancies are almost invariably *interior* to the prolongation of a *Stufe*: we are presented with an initial Chord I, which is followed by a string of other harmonies that are not themselves tonics and indeed might not even be triads, but which can still be said to prolong the tonic in some way, and we then return to another Chord I some hypothetical number of bars later. In Figure 1.20, however, it is the harmonies at both the beginning and the end points of the prolongation which yield different meanings when read horizontally or vertically.

It is difficult to resolve such a contradiction without loss. If one dispenses with the diminished-seventh *Bassbrechung* altogether, then one ignores the voice-leading structure established by the principal tonicisations (or, in the absence of such events, significant *attempts* at tonicisation) of the exposition and the development (see Figure 1.21) as well as the parallelism (registered in retrospect) that exists between the *Ursatz* and the movement's final auxiliary cadence.³⁸ If one suggests that the E minor harmonies at 0:2 and 12:2 are part of a larger dissonant formation, however, then one is in danger of occluding their straightforwardly triadic and consonant quality when they are heard in prospect. How can a diminished-seventh bass arpeggiation be said to compose out an E minor *Stufe* when it places so much emphasis on B_b, its most diatonically distant scale degree? That said, it is important to note that both harmonies have strong subdominant functions in relation to B major (i.e. the

³⁷ As Kofi Agawu puts it, 'an ending refers to local elements in the musical structure, whereas closure denotes a global mechanism [e.g. the composing out of an *Ursatz*]: 'Concepts of Closure and Chopin's Opus 28' in *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 9 (Spring, 1987): 1–17, at 4.

³⁸ Brian Trowell misses these subtleties: he considers the modulations to be merely 'incidental'. See: 'The Road to Brinkwells: the late chamber music' in Lewis Foreman (ed.) *The Music of Elgar – Vol 2: Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War* (Worcester: Elgar Enterprises, 2014), pp. 347–387, at p. 373.

movement's structural dominant). In a novel adaptation of Schenker's theory, then, the diminished-seventh *Bassbrechung* might be said not to prolong a specific chord but rather a specific *harmonic function*.

Figure 1.21: middleground graph, 0:1–12:2 (radical)

One further option not yet considered is to interpret the middleground harmonic succession of E minor, G major, B \flat major, and D \flat major in a neo-Riemannian manner: that is, as an octatonic cycle (see Figure 1.22). I refrain from doing so, however, because the voice-leading transformations indicated in the graph below are mostly of different cardinalities (namely, R, pR, and pRp). As David Kopp has argued, transformations between minor-third related chords are felt as unary because of ‘their similar aural profile’; they are not heard to be composed of a series of ‘diatonically based compound operations’, such as pRp.³⁹ In consequence, I maintain that my concept of a diminished-seventh *Bassbrechung*, which prolongs a single function rather than a single chord, can be said to capture the simplicity of this minor-third-based middleground gesture in a more convincing way.

³⁹ Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations*, p. 167.

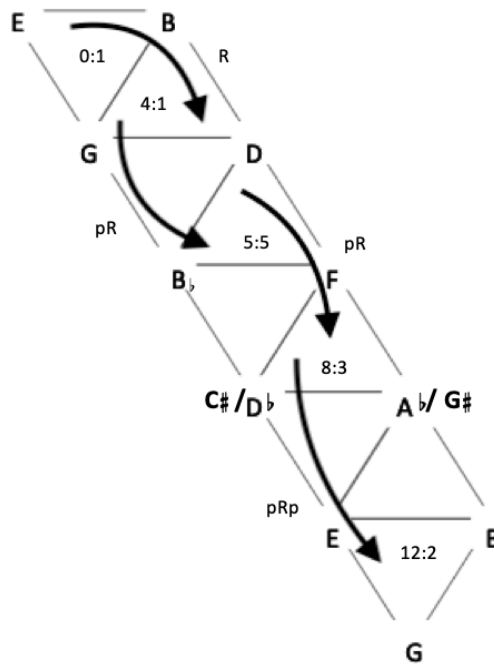


Figure 1.22: octatonic corridor, 0:1–12:2

§1.2.3 Conclusions

Despite the *Allegro moderato*'s complexity, W. H. Reed and Brian Trowell have respectively described the overall tonal plan of the movement as being 'more or less [...] orthodox' and 'clear enough', despite their acknowledgement of its modulatory novelty.⁴⁰ In other words, they invest the work's deep structure with an assumption of diatonic cadential coherence. I have attempted to account for this conviction analytically by means of two separate readings. The first was relatively conventional; the second, more radical. After extensive deliberation, I showed a fundamental preference for the latter, as it captures best the ways in which the movement's *Ursatz* mirrors exactly the movement's final local cadence.

However, while both the middle- and foreground elements of this parallelism imply resolution strongly through their association with the common-practice tradition (i.e. they are ostensibly 'conservative'), it is clear that the quality of closure implied in either case is by no means absolute. The post-cadential closes that comment on the final auxiliary cadence can induce one into doubting its strength, while the potentially divergent tonal significations of the horizontal and vertical

⁴⁰ Reed, 'Elgar', p. 374; Trowell, 'The Road to Brinkwells', p. 373.

dimensions of the middleground imply that the tonic chord is both a consonant triad and a dissonant seventh simultaneously.

As Harper-Scott argues, ‘it is the nature of modernist tonal music to move perpetually between the poles of integration and disintegration and to settle in each case on an individual accommodation which is more or less “conservative” or “radical”’.⁴¹ Of course, Elgar’s accommodation of disintegration in this movement is subtle and arguably conservative. The basic materials of which the movement is composed are all essentially nineteenth-century in nature: the *Allegro moderato* not only begins and ends in the same key, but it retains the use both of consonant major and minor triads as the staples of its harmonic syntax, and of cadences as a means of formal articulation. Furthermore, the succession of thematic groups clearly implies a textbook sonata-form design. However, its pretence at organic integration, so characteristic of the nineteenth-century chamber style typified by Brahms, belies the subtle disintegrations which define some of its most important moments. Elgar had an ear open to the tensions immanent in the combination of some of tonality’s most basic materials, which were so often hidden away and, through a process of habituation, forgotten.

Case Study 1.3: Chromatic major-third cycles (Violin Sonata, Romance)

Prominent among Schenker’s most controversial music-analytical concepts is his contention that a listener’s perception of harmonic identity may be an ‘illusory effect’, conjured by foreground counterpoint as a means of prolonging real middleground scale steps.⁴² What makes this idea controversial is that the surface harmonies in question can often be heard and understood straightforwardly in their own right, while

⁴¹ Harper-Scott, ‘Review: Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler and Philip Rupprecht (eds.), *Tonality 1900–1950: Concept and Practice* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012)’ in *Music Analysis*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2014): 388–405, at 399.

⁴² Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. & ed. Ernst Oster (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2001 [1935]), p. 11.

their middleground counterparts might be (for a time at least) aurally noumenal.⁴³ In Nicholas Cook's gloss, such a perspective luxuriates in the 'blatant contradiction between how the music is and how it sounds, between metaphysics and perception'.⁴⁴

While such a theoretical predisposition might sometimes cause an analyst to neglect foreground intricacies in favour of spotting more abstract forms of musical connection, it is my contention that an understanding of the relationship of these surface details to tectonic events at deeper levels of musical structure is imperative if we are properly to interpret them. This is the case even if the abstract counterpoint of the middle- or background is at times inaudible. In the same way that a historical artefact cannot be properly accounted for without some conception of the broader contexts in which it was originally embedded – including those to which the object might appear to have been only obliquely related – fragments of any given piece cannot be shorn away from their unfolding in time as part of the manifestation of a larger musical entity to which they might be subordinate.

What constitutes the background against which these details are unfolded, however, must be defined with some prudence. When working on tonal music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, the tendency of Schenker's theory to suggest that chromaticism is inherent to the musical surface, and that it dissimulates an underlying consonance at a deeper structural level, can sometimes stymie genuine musical understanding. The strength of his abstract idea is weakened by the over-particularity of the terms by which it is expressed. To remedy this, I suggest an inversion of syntax, whereby diatonicism might be described (in the relevant circumstances) as a foreground illusion, which obscures a chromatic background.⁴⁵ Such an inversion, however, engenders a necessary question about tonality.

⁴³ A succinct overview of the concept of foreground illusion can be found in Carl Schachter, 'Analysis by Key: Another Look at Modulation' in *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 134–160, at pp. 149–151.

⁴⁴ 'Review: Heinrich Schenker, Polemicist: A Reading of the Ninth Symphony Monograph' in *Music Analysis*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Mar., 1995): 89–105, at 93. Cook is here reflecting on the first-inversion D major chord at the beginning of the recapitulation of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Op. 125. Donald F. Tovey hears it as a literal, chromatically inflected chord, whereas Schenker hears the bass F# as a neighbour to the subdominant; Cook suggests that they are *both* right.

⁴⁵ Cohn touches on a similar idea when he avers that 'since the sixteenth century, the chromatic is an ornament to the diatonic; in the nineteenth century, the diatonic often becomes a subset of the chromatic': see *Audacious Euphony*, p. 106.

Imagine a piece beginning in C major, for example, which, at its most abstract structural level, transected the octave into equal major thirds. A neo-Riemannian might question the tonal credentials of such a background. Richard Cohn, for example, addresses the tonality (or lack thereof) of any given passage by determining the cardinality of pitch set by which it is orientated. He provides the following formula as a means of explanation: ‘When C is tonic, the triadic tones orient the diatonic ones, which in turn orient the chromatic ones, leading to the expanded expression chromatic (12+) → diatonic (7) → triad (3) → tonic (1)’.⁴⁶ When triads ‘are released from the diatonic capsule and the enharmonic seam breached’, however, as in our hypothetical background major-third cycle, this hierarchy is inverted. ‘We now have [... hexatonic⁴⁷ (6)] ← triad (3) ← tone (1)’.⁴⁸ In other words, larger pitch sets orientate smaller ones, rather than vice versa. This is because relationships between triads in a hexatonic system are determined by the smooth voice-leading connections immanent in a given symmetrical chromatic set, rather than by an asymmetrical diatonic scale derived from a single tonic and its corresponding subdominant and dominant harmonies. Consequently, it is not possible to isolate a single pitch that might serve as a fundamental centre against which all others can be defined in terms of varying degrees of closeness or distance. Particular triads in this system might receive stronger cadential support and/or timbral, rhythmic, or phrasal accentuation, but Cohn implies that any feeling of tonicity thus implied is merely rhetorical, rather than structural. It is on this account that he calls hexatonic progressions “atonal”, even despite the fact that they do not exhibit ‘the sonic properties that we associate with the prototypical atonality of Schoenberg and Webern’.⁴⁹

In a book chapter published in the same year as *Audacious Euphony*, Cohn similarly argues that cycles of major or minor thirds elude tonal explanation, this time because of Agmon’s Principle. He summarises this as follows:

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 204.

⁴⁷ A hexatonic system is made up of six triads: namely, the minor- and major-mode variants of chords whose fundamental roots lie a major third apart (e.g. C, c, E, e, A_b, a_b; these six chords are themselves assembled from six notes, C, E_b, E_♯, G, A_b, B).

⁴⁸ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 204.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 208.

Presented with two pitches in a context-free environment, we assign them to a diatonic rather than a chromatic interval. When the octave is equally divided into three- or four-semitone segments, Agmon's Principle dictates that we hear the bounding interval as seven diatonic steps (an octave); it also indicates that we hear each local interval as two diatonic steps (a third). These perceptions are in conflict. If the bounding interval is an octave, one of the local intervals is a non-diatonic dissonance (a diminished fourth or augmented second). If each local interval is a third, then the bounding interval is a non-diatonic dissonance, a diminished ninth in the first case, an augmented seventh in the second. Such conflicts imperil tonic identity, scale degree function, and the consonance/dissonance binary — i.e., everything upon which tonal judgments are secured.⁵⁰

Contrary to these neo-Riemannian points of view, which are in danger of reducing the complexities immanent in tonal listening to a Procrustean formal logic, this case study looks to provide analytical evidence in support of Edward Elgar's belief that chromatic-third cycles can prolong a tonic. Particularly instructive, in this respect, is his article on 'musical waterwheels', written for the *Westminster Gazette* in 1915, in which he discussed his approach to transposition and sequencing:

The waterwheel is as ubiquitous as ever in modern music. The Russians, inspired by the repetitions in their folk-tunes, have reduced it to a simple convention, which consists in repeating every two bars. Debussy caught it from them, and at a certain period of his development *two bars of consecutive major thirds were certain to be spun out to four*, but that is passed now, and he has found other waterwheels. [...] The masters, from Bach to Wagner, are all indebted to [musical waterwheels]. *They were the masters, not because they scorned to use them, but because with them the waterwheel is a mere adjunct to the house and not a pretext for the building.*⁵¹

⁵⁰ 'Peter, the Wolf, and the Hexatonic Uncanny' in *Tonality 1900–1950: Concept and Practice*, eds. Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler and Philip Rupprecht (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012), pp. 47–62, at p. 49.

⁵¹ Jerrold Northop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), my italics, pp. 684–685.

In the same way that waterwheels produce the energy which provides power to the buildings to which they are affixed, chromatic-third cycles are subordinate to a single harmonic centre (i.e. their root note) and drive its principal mechanical process: namely, the emission of tonality. It must be said, of course, that there is a hint of sophistry in Elgar's metaphor. Waterwheels are most often attached to watermills, the functions of which are entirely dependent on the wheel's ability to drive a given mechanical process. In this sense, the wheel is most certainly a pretext for the building. If the comparison is not pushed too far, however, it remains an energising way to think about the architectural and functional relationship between chromaticism and a tonal centre.

In order to recover the withheld theoretical working which undergirds Elgar's poetic metaphor, I pursue a number of Schenkerian, Riemannian, and Koppian interpretations of the Romance from Elgar's Violin Sonata, Op. 82. Elgar himself would obviously not have conceptualised this movement in terms of an *Ursatz*, a *Tonnetz*, or anything else of this kind, but these models extrapolate from musical features with which Elgar would have been familiar: namely, harmony and voice leading. Such theoretical apparatuses thus allow the analyst to get beyond the paucity of analytical vocabulary that was available to Elgar,⁵² while still displaying relative fidelity to the central meaning of his metaphor (i.e. that chromatic-third cycles prolong a tonic) and elucidating its technical foundations in explicitly musical terms which he himself might have recognised: that is, as (admittedly abstract) forms of chord progression and/or counterpoint. To the extent that these models sometimes facilitate perspectives contrary to Elgar's own, on account of their conceptual anachronism, I must depart from them (as when the implied geometric symmetry of the Riemannian *Tonnetz* leads some *neo*-Riemannians to doubt the possibility of there being a structurally established tonal centre). It is for this reason that I do not entertain various possible set-theoretical or explicitly music-geometrical

⁵² Elgar was famously critical of the music theorists of his day, although he was still very much analytically minded: see Ian Parrott, 'Elgar's Harmonic Language' in *Elgar Studies*, ed. Raymond Monk (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), pp. 35–45, at pp. 38–42. He delivered a number of technical lectures on music, the most famous of which was his Peyton lecture on Brahms's Third Symphony in 1905. The analytical substance of his argument is now lost to us, but it was reported that Elgar 'pointed out the principles on which the movements were constructed and the themes by which they were knit together': Edward, Elgar, *A Future for English Music and other Lectures*, ed. Percy M. Young (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968), p. 104.

interpretations of the Romance, even though they provide formidable means of theorising tonal intention and structure. This is because they display a mode of thought which would have been entirely alien to Elgar's day. Both Schenker and Riemann, by contrast, were almost exact contemporaries of Elgar's, and while they were probably unknown to the English composer, they both abstracted their principles from very much the same repertoires and technologies as those Elgar was interested in.

Elgar might even have welcomed such abstraction. What most provoked his ire, as regards the theory textbooks that he had encountered, was ““that they [taught] building, not architecture””.⁵³ He did not compose in order merely ‘to build’. Rather, he wanted to produce something that could be contemplated aesthetically as an abstract whole. The kinds of graphic representation made possible by theory and analysis thus enable us to imagine what his architectural blueprints might have looked like. Furthermore, demonstrating the relevance of Elgar's theory to the understanding of one of his own pieces enables me to suggest that he saw his metaphor as having practical (as well as abstract-theoretical) application. It is relatively rare that a composer offers their view – no matter how gnomic – on the relationship between chromatic, sequential structures and broader tonal architecture; when they do, it is worth fleshing their ideas out analytically, both so that we might better understand their music, and so that we might shine new light on recent theoretical debates about chromatic tonality.

§1.3.1 The Romance

The contradictions which animate the middle movement of Elgar's Violin Sonata are not limited to a syntactical disjunction between background and foreground. The A and B sections of its ternary form are also seen to be diametrically opposed to one another, particularly at a rhetorical level. William H. Reed described the inner B section of the Romance's ternary form as a slow movement within a scherzo.⁵⁴ In Andrew Colton's words, it is ‘palpably nostalgic, a return to the (lost) Romantic world

⁵³ Robert J. Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: John Lane: The Bodley Head, 1904), p. 13.

⁵⁴ Letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 11 March 1919, cited in Grimley ‘The chamber music and works for strings’, p. 131. Reed was the leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, a close friend of Elgar's, and an active collaborator in the composition of the Violin Sonata.

of beauty and idealism'.⁵⁵ More prosaically put, 'the harmonic movement is clear and (at this point) startlingly traditional (in B_b major)⁵⁶ – a key which I look to explain as a foreground illusion. Critical commentary on the Scherzo-like materials which bookend it, by contrast, tends to stress ambiguity: these sections are heard to be characterised by 'gentle fragmentation',⁵⁷ an 'elliptical' salon style,⁵⁸ and a 'nervous', 'spectral quality'.⁵⁹ Harmonically ambiguous and contrapuntally idiosyncratic as they are, these scherzos manifest the only root-position cadences of the movement, in C# minor and A major respectively; the latter key is prolonged at the section's end by a series of plagal, post-cadential closes.

To ascertain which of these cadences serves to manifest the movement's overall tonic, I appeal to Caplin's theory of formal functions.⁶⁰ It might appear strange to use a theory devised in relation to the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven to analyse a work composed in 1918, but in tonal music of all periods thematic units will always imply some sense either of beginning, middle, or end, or perhaps even a blend of all three. The great advantage of Caplin's theory is that it is built from the bottom up. While he often describes how these syntactic units, suggestive of initiation (i.e. thematic presentation), continuation (i.e. sequential repetition and fragmentation) or conclusion (i.e. cadence), might be grouped together as part of a relatively small taxonomy of classical formal types, this is a secondary part of his theory. Indeed, the vocabulary he uses to describe the smallest building blocks of musical syntax can be used to account for phenomena which group together in ways totally different from classical works, but which still suggest the same basic harmonic functions (presented either individually or as hybrids) that are immanent in diatonic or chromatically inflected musical languages more generally.⁶¹ Similarly, while Caplin's earlier work on classical cadences is often too restrictive to be useful for later music – even in the early

⁵⁵ Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style', p. 142.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵⁸ Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 175.

⁵⁹ Percy M. Young, *Elgar O.M.: A Study of a Musician* (London: White Lion Publishers, 1973), p. 350.

⁶⁰ See William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁶¹ See, for example, Julian Horton, 'Formal Function and Formal Type in the Postclassical Piano Concerto' in *Formal Functions in Perspective: Essays on Musical Form from Haydn to Adorno*, eds. Steven Vande Moortele, Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers, and Nathan John Martin (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2015), pp. 77–122, at p. 80.

romantic period, the definition of musical closure had been drastically expanded – his recent work on the romantic cadence is successful not because it revitalises his earlier search to define what is and what is not a cadence, but because it assesses the relative strengths of a number of different *kinds* of cadence.⁶² In music as subtle as the opening section of the Romance, relative cadential strength makes a dramatic difference to formal articulation, and so it is important to have sensitive analytical tools with which to help clarify the differences between points of harmonic closure.

Ironically, the ‘nervous’ A sections are more traditionally tonal – syntactically if not rhetorically – than the confident inner slow movement, which eschews all forms of properly cadential closure. Furthermore, while an orthodox Schenkerian reading of the B section appears to be required by the idiom of the music, cutting this section away from its wider context shuts the analyst out from a larger process, obscured by diatonicism: namely, the ‘composing out’ of the tonic triad through a background cycle of chromatic major thirds. Indeed, as Richard Cohn has argued, ‘hexatonic systems are [often] lightly tonicised using the standard resources of diatonic tonality, so that the systems are not present “on the surface”, but at a thinly veiled level of middleground’.⁶³ I will follow Elgar, however, in arguing that this middleground still prolongs a single tonic, despite abandoning diatonic forms of reference. In the proceeding section, I describe how this tonic is established in the opening scherzo; following on from that, I detail how it is prolonged chromatically as part of the inner slow movement.

§1.3.2 The outer ‘Scherzos’

It is strange that Percy Young referred to the Romance’s opening progression, depicted below (Example 1.7), as being ‘temporarily keyless’.⁶⁴ It is undoubtedly ambiguous, but its ambiguity arises precisely because the Romance’s first four bars are so cadentially suggestive: they imply two keys, as opposed to no key at all.

⁶² See (respectively) William Caplin, ‘The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions’ in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Spring 2004): 51–118, and ‘Beyond the Classical Cadence: Thematic Closure in Early Romantic Music’ in *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring 2018): 1–26.

⁶³ Richard Cohn, ‘Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions’ in *Music Analysis*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Mar., 1996): 9–40, at 32.

⁶⁴ Percy Young, *Elgar, O.M.: A Study of a Musician* (London: White Lion Publishers, 1973 [1955]), p. 350.

Example 1.7: Elgar, Violin Sonata, Op. 82, 2nd movement, -:1–22:1

Elgar begins with what seems like (in prospect) a standard double neighbour-note motion from IV6/3 to V in F# (see -:1 to 2, Figure 1.23). The spacing, registral position, and mode of this V are then altered so as to produce a 6/4 chord in bar 3; it might be construed (at a stretch) as an extension in time and space of the chord immediately before it, but its earlier cadential import is seemingly abandoned.⁶⁵ However, 6/4 sonorities are capable of implying imminent cadential discharge as well as mere inversion. Elgar resolves the upper voices downwards to create a G# sonority with dominant function (-:4); the initial B major 6/3 might now be rationalised (in retrospect) as a pre-dominant VII6/3 in an auxiliary cadence in C#.

⁶⁵ 'An abandoned cadence results when the penultimate dominant either fails to appear or becomes inverted prior to its resolution to the tonic': see Caplin, 'Beyond the Classical Cadence', 3, n9.

Figure 1.23: voice-leading reduction, -:1–22:2

It is hard to decide whether the resultant dominant at -:4, beats 1 to 2, is of an ultimate or a penultimate kind: that is, whether V is a goal in itself, or (by contrast) a harmony that directly precedes the arrival of some kind of tonic.⁶⁶ The pianist's enunciation of the neighbour-note figure of the opening anacrusis at -:4, beat 3 (refer back to Example 1.7), which had hitherto been associated with the violin part, might be heard as an extension in time of the function of the dominant from the previous beat, but it also sounds in some way detached. The full-sounding seventh chord is pared back to bare octaves and there is an extreme registral drop of two octaves. As such, the neighbour-note figure can be heard to group forwards rather than backwards, an effect which is heightened by the decrescendo on the violin's held G# (-:4).⁶⁷ The opening four bars (plus the opening anacrusis) might thus be thought either to articulate a half cadence (in which case the dominant is ultimate, as in the antecedent phrase of a period) or an evaded cadence (as if the dominant were penultimate, but fails to find a satisfactory resolution).⁶⁸ In both cases, the last beat of -:4 represents a syntactically separate upbeat;⁶⁹ and while the resultant leap of a fourth

⁶⁶ William Caplin cites the blurring of ultimate and penultimate dominant functions as a fingerprint of the Romantic style: *ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁷ I borrow this term from Caplin, *Classical Form*, p. 101.

⁶⁸ 'A cadence is evaded when the event that follows the penultimate dominant seems not to represent the final event of the cadential process, no matter what its harmonic support': Caplin, 'Beyond the Classical Cadence', 3.

⁶⁹ Yehudi Menuhin's recording of the Romance, with its pronounced lingering on the spread dominant seventh on the second beat of -:4, seems very much to support these intuitions: see Edward Elgar, *Elgar • Vaughan Williams • Walton: Violin Sonatas*, Yehudi and Hepzibah Menuhin, CD, EMI Classics, 5 66122 2, ©1996. A perfect cadence might still be heard, of course, but whichever designation the

in the bass to C# at 22:1 still implies a cadence-like topic, both the sparseness of this gesture and its effective disruption of the earlier, much fuller dominant, make it sound too weak to effect a genuine close: it is a pale simulacrum of the affirmation we had been expecting.

The basic idea of 22:1 to 2 is thematically unrelated to the previous material, which compounds the sense of disconnection between the dominant on the second beat of -:4 and the music that comes after it (refer back to Figure 1.23). It oscillates between i and V4/2 in c#. The latter chord has mixed harmonic function due to the subdominant flavour of the prominent $\hat{4}/A$ in its bass, which gives this passage an effectively prolongational (as opposed to cadential) quality, suggestive of initiating (as opposed to closing) function.

C# minor is further prolonged via a neighbouring diminished chord between 22:3 and 4 (see Figure 1.24). Rather than working towards a cadence, this prolongation results in a modal transformation, with C# minor becoming C#7, which marks a possible allusion to the implied F# key centre of the opening, albeit one that is negated by the superstrong resolution to D major at 22:5 (i.e. VII₃7-I). In prospect, D major sounds like \flat II but it quickly becomes apparent that it also functions as IV of A major. (As we shall see in the following section, both of these harmonic relationships – Neapolitan and plagal – take on great motivic significance in the B section.) As soon as it is attained, however, A major segues smoothly back to C# minor via a half-diminished ii6/5 chord; the falling fourth in the bass (F# to C#) suggests a plagal (and, in this instance, merely prolongational) close. Elgar hints at the A major tonic that is to come, while failing to confirm the structural import of the ambiguous prolongation of C# minor with a perfect cadence.

analyst ultimately opts for will necessarily be ‘a rough approximation based on the consideration and balancing of various stabilizing and destabilizing features’. It is thus difficult to suggest that there is a clear-cut, syntactically- and rhetorically-strong close in C# minor at 22:1. See Poundie Burstein, ‘The Half Cadence and Related Analytical Fictions’ in *What is a Cadence?: Theoretical and Analytical Perspectives on Cadences in the Classical Repertoire*, eds. Markus Neuwirth & Pieter Bergé (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), pp. 85–116, at p. 105.

Figure 1.24: voice-leading reduction, 22:3–23:1

A major begins to accrue a more explicitly tonic-like quality from 24:2 onwards after being tonicised by a $vii^{04/3}$ chord at 24:1; once again, the characteristic fall of a fourth in the bass from D to A gives this progression a plagal charge (see Figure 1.25). While the thematic materials of the C# minor music were fragmentary, never exceeding a bar in length, the quality of melody here is long-breathed by comparison; even though it is broken up into alternating two- and three-bar phrases, each is elided with the other, either on account of held over notes or a continuous, descending melodic line in the violin part (see the overlapping phrase markings in Figure 1.25).

Figure 1.25: voice-leading reduction, 24:1–25:4

The pre-dominant B major chord at 24:3 is prepared by *Tristan*-esque movement from a half-diminished seventh on d# to F#4/3; C# is held over in the upper voice while the bass descends a third and the inner voices engage in neighbour-note motions. Rather than discharging to V/A, however, the suspended dissonances held over the B in the bass at 24:3 (i.e. ninth and seventh) allow the chord to melt seamlessly to vi, which initiates an arpeggiation of A major's subdominant in yet another reference to the plagal domain. Standing at the head of a descending fourth progression, the resultant D \flat in the bass at 24:4 forges a return to the tonic at 25:2.

The ensuing passage between 25:2 and 5 can be parsed in two ways. In performance, it can be made to sound almost like a I-II^{9/7}-V-I progression (see Figure 1.25). A sense of cadential arrival at 25:5 is made explicit in Yehudi Menuhin's recording of the work, for example: he and the pianist, Hephzibah Menuhin, pause on the A major harmony for what seems almost an unnaturally long time, as if to emphasise its newly affirmed tonic status;⁷⁰ this is anticipated by the conspicuous nudge given to the earlier A major chord on the second beat of 25:1. Even though the space between V and I (25:4 to 5) is filled in by a decorated #vii₅ chord, this interpolation materialises in the middle voices of the piano, meaning that the leap of a fourth in the bass (E-A) can still sound functional. However, the melody's metric grouping (3+2 bars) can also suggest its division into two constituent formal functions: 1) an E major cadence between 25:2 and 4; and 2) a post-cadential [E: I-II^{6/5}-iii-IV] progression between 25:4 and 5. Despite its ultimate ambiguity, this passage remains structurally important: A major sounds both like a tonic and like the subdominant of its dominant; it either consummates a perfect cadence or it suggests tonal polarisation through the tonicisation of its dominant *Stufe*. C# minor, it should be noted, received neither honour.

The state of repose implied for the tonic by the Menuhins is rhetorically weakened owing to its subsequent inclusion in a descending arpeggiation to the root of A major's subdominant (see Figure 1.26), as part of what seems almost like a post-cadential closing area. IV is prolonged by a middleground D-C \flat -C#-D neighbour-note figure between 25:5 and 27:6. C \flat descends a linear fourth to G \flat as part of what

⁷⁰ Menuhin, *Elgar • Vaughan Williams • Walton: Violin Sonatas*. The sense of emphatic arrival is even more pronounced at the equivalent place in the repeat of the A section at 37:5 (08:49–53).

at first appears to be a linear composing out of the relative major, but V's 6/4 appoggiaturas refuse to fall. G₄ then pushes up to G₄ as a lower neighbour to C₅'s dominant; C₅ itself resolves to D major at 27:6 and thus resuscitates the earlier Neapolitan relationship.⁷¹

The strong, dotted-minim emphasis given to the tonic's plagal affirmation at 28:1 is to be contrasted with the reduction of the tonic root note, A, to a single quaver in the bass of the piano at 25:5 as part of the earlier 'IAC'.⁷² Rhetorically, syntactically, and durationally speaking, the plagal close is far stronger. This helps further to spotlight A major as the logical candidate for the global tonic: it is the only key area to receive genuine cadential benefaction. First made manifest by an ambiguous V–I tonic close, which might also be heard to function as a I–IV progression in E major, A major is later consolidated by a luxurious plagal resolution, which purges it of any residual sense of IV-ness.

Figure 1.26: bass-line reduction, 25:4–28:1⁷³

While in certain respects chromatic, then, the A section of the Romance is manifestly diatonic in terms of its middleground structure. In prospect, its C₅ minor music might be heard to vie with other keys for potential tonic status – on occasion, the Menuhins

⁷¹ The return of the opening material in C₅ major between 27:1 to 5 might be thought of as a foreshadowing of the D₅/C₅ major of the chromatic major-third cycle (A–D₅–F–A) which controls the coming B section.

⁷² Hephzibah Menuhin ignores this written articulation and sustains this A into the F₅ on the second beat of the bar, reintroducing the written quaver rests for the F₅ and the D on beats 2 and 3.

⁷³ The crotchet rest in this example is not redundant. I use it to demonstrate that the upper voice drops out; it does not harmonise with the following G₅. The use of notational rests throughout the remainder of this thesis indicates the same phenomenon.

treat the two almost as if they were equal members of a double-tonic complex⁷⁴ – but its two principal functions in relation to the global tonic, A major, solidify retrospectively. It can be described both as: 1) a neighbour note to D (i.e. the root of the plagal harmonies, which are so prominent throughout the A major music) as part of a Neapolitan harmonic complex; and 2) the modally matched dominant (i.e. the upper relative minor, or URM) of A major’s relative, F# minor, given the tendency of C# chords to take on dominant function. A neo-Riemannian might classify C# minor as a leading-tone transformation of A major, but the former labels seem ultimately more sensitive to their musical contexts: they make better sense of the prominent root motions, C#–A and C#–D, as well as of the fleeting intrusions of f#-related harmonies.

Now that the Romance’s opening tonic has been ascertained, I will demonstrate how it is prolonged by a middleground chromatic major-third cycle in the B section. This results in a reading that is very much at odds with previous commentary on the movement.

§1.3.3 Slow movement within a scherzo

The middle section of the Romance is frequently taken to be a representation of past simplicity, in sharp distinction to that which Ivor Keys describes as the ‘strangeness’ of the musical frame with which it is contrasted.⁷⁵ From a Schenkerian standpoint, this ‘slow movement’ does indeed appear to be scaffolded by a traditional gesture: the middleground analysis shown in Figure 1.27 below conceptualises the section as prolonging a B_b major tonic through a I–_bIII–V arpeggiation. Immediately apparent, however, is the relative weakness of chord I compared with V and _bIII.

⁷⁴ For example, they linger over the arrival on V/C# major at 27:1 even longer than they had on the earlier A major chord at 25:5, despite both its lack of orthodox harmonic resolution and C#’s functioning ultimately as a middleground neighbour note to IV/A. Rubato emphasis is intended to make up for syntactic weakness.

⁷⁵ Keys, “Ghostly Stuff”, p. 111.

Figure 1.27: middleground bass reduction, 28:3–33:5

From a more foreground perspective (see Figure 1.28), one can see that the I_{6/3} triad at 28:3 is preceded by a root-position A major triad (28:1). Maintaining its bass note, this harmony is transformed into an F major 6/3 sonority at 28:2; it functions as V/B_b.⁷⁶ The special quality of this harmonic change has been noted by a number of commentators; Ivor Keys suggests that it might be heard as a ‘step into the distance’.⁷⁷ The apparent diatonicism of B_b major is clouded by major-third-related chromaticism right from the outset.⁷⁸

Figure 1.28: voice-leading reduction, 28:1–29:15

⁷⁶ I will later describe this chord as A major’s Lower Flat Mediant (LFM): that is, as a chromatic major triad whose fundamental is situated a major third below the root of the tonic.

⁷⁷ Keys, “Ghostly Stuff”, p. 111.

⁷⁸ The inclusion of this chord under the same rehearsal-figure number (i.e. 28) as the B section’s beginning in the original score indicates that it cannot be discounted from any interpretation on the basis that it is a hangover from the earlier A section. It belongs, conceptually, to the ‘slow movement’.

The next root-position chord to be sounded, besides those which are interior to the sequence between 29:7 and 15, is the D_b at 29:15. Like the earlier A major chord at 28:1, this triad is notated as a dotted minim, which is further elongated in duration by a fermata.⁷⁹ The rhythmic and textural spotlighting of these two chords, which appear on either side of a series of flowing quavers, link these two harmonies aurally in the mind of the listener. Furthermore, their relative stability as root-position harmonies is considerable when contrasted both with the stream of inversions between 28:2 and 29:7 and with the weakly sequential harmonies between 29:7 and 15, which they together serve to bookend. Note also the common-tone $C\#/D_b$ shared between the two in the upper voice, which appears in the same register. While these harmonies are not conventionally tonicised, small gestures of these kinds can carry great weight in music as refined as this, which means that it is possible for a listener to perceive them as middleground structural goals.

Two overall interpretations of this passage are thus possible: a more orthodox one, in which B_b major is prolonged by a series of initial-order descents,⁸⁰ and a second, in which the $B_b/6/3$ chord at 27:7 is *not* a tonic, but rather an extensively prolonged neighbour note, which resolves to a bass D_b at 29:15 and thus connects the global tonic (i.e. A major) with its upper sharp mediant (USM: i.e. $C\#/D_b$ major), something far more potent than a simple third divider. The relevant B_b and D_b triads (see 29:7 to 15) are respectively located at the beginning and the end of a cycle of fifths, meaning that they, and the prominent neighbour-note motion, $D_b\text{--}D_b$, are invested with a sense of direct relationship, despite their rhythmic displacement (see Figure 1.28). Indeed, rather than being an unexpected sidestep, this semitonal

⁷⁹ The label USM (Upper Sharp Mediant) used in the graph denotes a chord built on the tonic's mediant with a raised major third (i.e. $C\#$ major in an A major context). I have also included the neo-Riemannian transformational label IP in the diagram for thoroughness, which indicates that the distance between $C\#$ major and A major might be thought of as being bridged by a leading-tone transformation (L) followed by a parallel-mode transformation (P). It is bracketed, however, as I do not believe it is an apposite descriptor for what is going on in Figure 1.28. The relative strengths of these labels (UFM versus PL) will be discussed towards the end of this section.

⁸⁰ An initial-order descent refers to a linear movement from the *Kopfton* ($\hat{5}$ in this case) to an inner-voice $\hat{1}$, with the *Kopfton* being reintroduced above it. It is different from a normal linear progression in that it not only prolongs the tonic, but also 'exerts a special charm: the deceptive effect of a fundamental line': Schenker, *Free Composition*, p. 44. In this example, however, the relevant dominants and dominant substitutes are presented in weak inversions, merely prolonging B_b as a harmony which might belong to a number of tonalities, as opposed to crowning it as a controlling tonic. As such, these initial-order descents are not genuinely cadential.

descent in the bass can be parsed as a motivic throwback to the A section's C#–D Neapolitan: that is to say, it partakes in the piece's broader motivic/harmonic complex.

The music from 30:1 onwards presents a repetition, albeit with an extended interpolation of new material between 31:1 and 32:6, of the passage beginning at 28:1 (see Figure 1.29). Special rhetorical weight is afforded to the *root-position* B \flat major chord at 32:6, which marks the culmination of an arpeggiation, itself prolonged by a voice exchange. This sense of arrival is ameliorated, however, by the subsequent cycle of fifths (E \flat –A \flat –D \flat), separated by third dividers, between 32:6 and 13.

Figure 1.29: voice-leading reduction, 30:1–33:5

At the moment of denouement, the music does not resolve to I; B \flat major becomes B \flat minor at 33:4 and functions as an altered subdominant, which resolves to F major at 33:5. This chord is sustained the longest of any harmony in the work (barring the movement's final tonic A major chord) and its voices are spread over five octaves in a triple *pianissimo* hush, which makes for a harmony of almost ethereal repose.⁸¹ After it, there is a dramatic change in both texture and mood at the upbeat to 34:1, which marks the repetition of the A section.

As seen in Figure 1.27, it would be idiomatic, if one were thinking in orthodoxly Schenkerian terms, to label this final chord as V, as it can be represented as the completion of a modally mixed arpeggiation in B \flat (namely, I– \flat III–V). The

⁸¹ Colton similarly hears this section as final: in his words, it dies 'away to end on a conclusive-sounding F major chord in the piano'. See 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style', p. 73.

surface contexts, however, which would give such a label its meaning, have been shown to be very weak indeed: the B section's opening is more likely scaffolded by a middleground progression from A major to D \flat major. In light of this, we might ask whether the final F major chord of the Romance's B section should be explained in an entirely different way. If we were to consider the B section as composing out two parts of a chromatic chain in a larger thirds cycle, for example, then F major – the tonic A major's Lower Flat Mediant (LFM) – would be the logical harmony of continuation after the earlier UFM, D \flat , at 32:13 and 29:15. Indeed, it is fitting that this harmony should end the 'slow movement', as it was a LFM shift from A major to F major which began it at 28:1 to 2.

The chromatic charge of the B section's deeper middleground might appear to be mirrored by a short surface passage between 31:3 and 5. Left out from Figure 1.29, this music is represented in full in Figure 1.30. It depicts a string of dominant sevenths – namely, A7, C7, and E \flat 7 – traversed via chromatic tetrachordal voice leading. The first of these chords can be reconciled with the prevailing local sense of key – namely, D minor – as a true dominant, but the latter two are more difficult to account for using Roman numerals. Despite this, their tonal function is easy enough to explain: C7 and E \flat 7 can be thought of as minimal perturbations of $c\sharp^{07}$, to use the Cohnian terminology explored in Case Study 1.1 of this chapter. This dissonant sonority functions initially as a voice-leading substitute for the dominant until, at 31:6, it becomes $vii^{07}/iv/A$ and initiates a descending fourth progression in the tenor, which supports a strongly subdominant-tinged return to D minor's dominant at 31:8. The logic of the surface remains overwhelmingly diatonic, despite the brief flirtation with chromaticism; a syntactic conflict between structural levels is still clear-cut.

Figure 1.30: voice-leading reduction, 31:3–32:1

The moment of expected cadential resolution at 31:8 to 32:1 once more engages the motivic/harmonic complex set up by the scherzo-like music which precedes the B section. Considered in intervallic terms, the strongly emphasised descending fifth-motion in the bass (A down to the lowest D on the piano) is an inversion of the plagal gestures which prolong the tonic chord of A major in the outer scherzos. The bass D is harmonised with a B \flat , however, as part of a deceptive resolution: an implied $\hat{5}$ is elided with a suspended $\hat{6}$; B \flat 6/3 is revealed to be a voice-leading substitute for D minor, which relates to the A major tonic of the scherzo as a middleground iv *Stufe*.⁸² However, this connection might only be made on the basis of a listening which prioritises motivic detail from earlier in the piece. Tonally speaking, D minor sounds like chord iii in a larger B \flat context and the pivotal A7 (owing to the prominence of B \flat 's leading tone in the bass) might be heard as a substitute dominant (i.e. V7/iii–I).

In summary, much of the ‘Scherzo’ prolongs a tonic A major triad and the B section composes out its upper sharp and lower flat mediant as part of a chromatic major-third cycle. Despite their topical dissimilarity, these two sections participate in the same linear chromatic process. The B section’s apparent diatonicism might sound locally autonomous, but such effects are really illusions of the foreground, which serve to prolong a chromatic background. As part of a set of allusions to the harmonic and motivic relationships of the A section, the root of the B section’s much-repeated B \flat 6/3 chord operates both as a Neapolitan-like neighbour note to D \flat major (due to the

⁸² B \flat major and D minor might also be described as being related by an L transformation, but this diminishes the relative importance of the chord’s root (D), which is heard as a local diatonic goal rather than as a neutral node in chromatic space: Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 17.

prominent $D\flat-D\flat$ motion in the bass) and as a disguised D minor *Stufe*, which instantiates a plagal middleground connection with the movement's overall tonic, A major.

After a brief return to C# minor at 35:1, the chromatic major-third cycle eventually returns to its starting point of A major at 36:1, which imbues the music with a sense of logical completion. I have provided two graphic readings of this progression as it plays out across the global whole: one which depicts the movement's traversal of a hexatonic alley (Figure 1.31), and a second, which uses a Schenkerian-style notation annotated with David Kopp's transformational labels (Figure 1.32). These two graphs derive different meanings from what is effectively the same structural phenomenon.

For Richard Cohn, progressions such as these demonstrate the triad's 'second nature'. Conventional ideas about monotonicity, exemplified by Schenkerian analysis, rely on the triad's acoustical make-up (i.e. its first nature) as a means of explaining it. The 'chord of nature' is thrown out by the chaotic universe and disciplined by the composer: the overtone series is closed down by a descending *Urfinie* in a perfect synthesis of natural law and human artifice. For Cohn, however, triads have a second quality, which makes them especially attractive to composers: namely, their 'status as *minimal perturbations* of [...] perfectly even augmented triads'.⁸³ This facilitates their participation in maximally smooth cycles as, 'via single semitone displacement, each major triad communicates with two minor triads, and each minor triad communicates with two major triads', all of which can be derived from two virtual augmented trichords.⁸⁴ If the resultant consonant triads and their interrelationships were to be mapped on to a *Tonnetz*, a hexatonic cycle would be the result. For Cohn, tonality ceases to be emitted when progressions put voice-leading efficiency and logic above other concerns.⁸⁵ For neo-Riemannians, the strength of the hexatonic alley in graphically representing progressions such as these is that they imply no fundamental

⁸³ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 34. Cohn looks to account for the integral position of virtual augmented triads in chromatic pan-triadic music as a historical idea (pp. 43–46) but it remains, at root, a speculative and metaphysical argument about the way in which music 'works', which is not in the least to deny its usefulness or explanatory power.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁸⁵ Schenker similarly prioritises counterpoint over harmony in many interpretative situations, albeit his theory is never independent of conceptions of root and scale degree in the way that Cohn suggests his own to be: see *Audacious Euphony*, p. 17.

centre, on account of their geometric symmetry, although Riemann himself did not entertain this view.⁸⁶

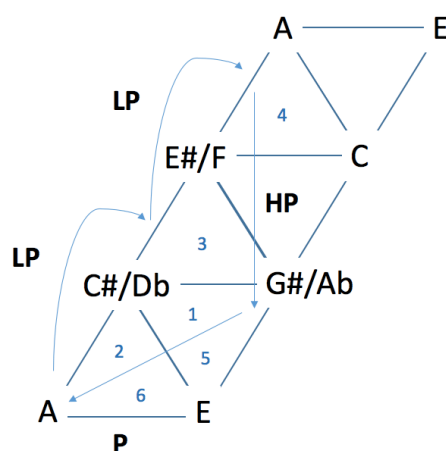


Figure 1.31: Hexatonic Alley, 22:1–37:5

In my Cohnian reading of the Romance (Figure 1.31), Elgar traverses a hexatonic alley via a series of PL transformations (steps 2, 3, and 4), with A major being decorated with its own *Leittonwechsel* (steps 1 and 6), which might be conceptualised as a form of ‘off-tonic’ beginning. The layout of this diagram gives the impression that this cycle could go on forever, and that Elgar’s decision to end on A major is, to a certain extent, an arbitrary one. Cohn concedes that ‘the six triads [of a hexatonic cycle] are equally likely recipients of rhetorical or cadential benefaction’, but he maintains that ‘the progression itself is neutral with respect to its potential tonics’.⁸⁷ However, it is difficult to imagine Elgar thinking of the Romance’s chromatic third cycle in this way. His waterwheel does not spin in mid air; its attachment to a tonal house is not factitious, but rather its very *raison d’être*. Bearing this in mind, I shall argue that A major is not only a rhetorical tonic, but a structural one, too. David Kopp’s theory of chromatic tonality provides an excellent means by which to demonstrate this. As he explains,

We may call music pentatonic, whole tone, diatonic, or octatonic when it takes place largely within individual instances or related groups of those sets. Music

⁸⁶ See Kopp, ‘Chromaticism and the Question of Tonality’, pp. 400–401.

⁸⁷ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 23.

organized by chromatic third relations, however, does not normally remain within the hexatonic set defined by its structural triads, but (other than strict triadic sequences) tends to be as locally diatonic or chromatic as its style and surroundings. Thus, in this context, ‘hexatonic’ seems like a misnomer. Harmonic organization in music such as this is, I think, better understood as one aspect of a greater chromatic tonality.⁸⁸

On a foreground level, for example, the Romance is often plainly diatonic. The hexatonic collection which results from Cohn’s maximally smooth cycle (A–C–D_b–E–F–G_#) lacks either vertical or horizontal permutation. Only three of its pitches are featured as roots in the movement’s middleground, suggesting that their origin might be explained more satisfactorily by other means.

Crucially, the excursions to D_b major and F major need not be heard as denaturing a tonal framework centred on A at all. As Kopp explains, ‘after two identical chromatic third relations, the likely continuation is one more of the same – which provides the return to the tonic’.⁸⁹ Furthermore, ‘the differentness of the two major-third related keys set off the tonic, recognizable in its own aural character, more dramatically than do the keys of the dominants’.⁹⁰ This is because the chromatic mediants ‘are not part of legitimate, directed modulations’, meaning that they remain ‘within the tonic purview, and, by operating at its limits, actually enhance the sense of key by the even stronger sense of arrival to the tonic they evoke in comparison to it when it comes’.⁹¹ (D_b major and F major never imply independent key areas, for example, existing rather as strongly marked harmonies in a broader tonal context.) My Koppian analysis looks to develop a similar idea (see Figure 1.32).

⁸⁸ Kopp, ‘Chromaticism and the Question of Tonality’, p. 414.

⁸⁹ Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations*, p. 229.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

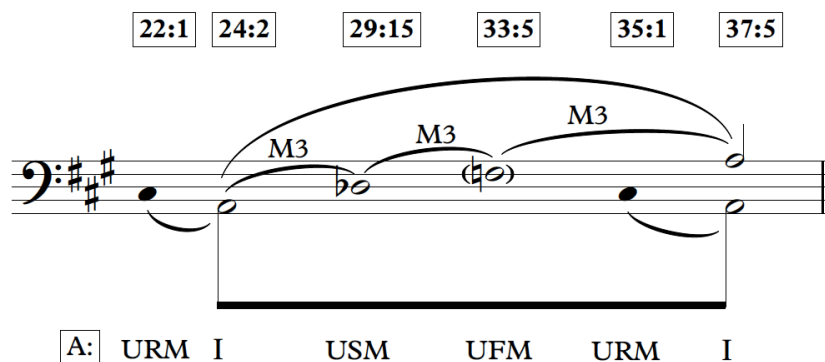


Figure 1.32: background graph (bass), 22:1–37:5

The Romance begins ‘off-tonic’ with the upper relative mediant (C# minor), before proceeding to A major, which is subsequently ‘prolonged’ through its upper sharp and lower flat mediants.⁹² The bass beaming, as well as the slur covering the three major-third jumps, implies that this progression plays itself out under the auspices of a single, controlling tonic.

To return to Elgar’s waterwheel metaphor, it does not stretch the limits of credibility to suggest that A major is the house to which the Romance’s water-wheel thirds are affixed: an impression that is well encapsulated by Figure 1.32. While neo-Riemannian methodologies describe in wonderful detail the maximally smooth rotations of a well-oiled wheel, they often provide readers with little sense of what it attaches to, or of what it powers. In short, they fail to capture the essence of Elgar’s metaphor.

It is worth noting that a number of other recent theorists have made the argument that chromatic harmonies can still strongly imply a sense of tonal centre, despite forgoing the tonic–dominant relationships of classical tonality. Steven Rings, for example, argues that chromatic harmonies derive their piquant colour by virtue of their being heard *against* a tonal centre.⁹³ If the chords of D \flat major and F major were sounded in isolation, we would be likely to hear them as fairly neutral acoustic signals.

⁹² There is even precedent for graphing progressions such as these in Schenker’s own practice. In his analysis of Hugo Wolf’s ‘Das Ständchen’, for example, Schenker marks the tonic as being prolonged by an arpeggiation of pure major thirds in the bass: see *Free Composition (Supplement: Musical Examples)*, (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2001), Figure 100/6. See also Schenker’s graphs of the second movement of Beethoven’s Spring Sonata, Op. 24, Fig. 100:6b, and the development of the first movement of the Appassionata Sonata, Op. 57, Fig. 114:8 (ibid).

⁹³ Steven Rings, ‘Riemannian Analytical Values, Paleo- and Neo-’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Riemannian Music Theories*, eds. Edward Gollin & Alexander Rehding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 487–511.

If they were heard in the context of a global prolongation of A major, by contrast, a listener would be likely to infuse those acoustic signals with a number of metaphorical characteristics (e.g. dark or bright; near or distant, etc.), which would be directly conditioned by their relationship to a perceived centre. The result is that chromatic harmonies are not heard as ‘less tonal [in] character than the more traditional tonal harmonies [...] but *more*’.⁹⁴ To borrow an expression of Dmitri Tymoczko’s, D \flat major and F major might be heard as ‘harmonic penumbra[s]’, which briefly dull the brightness emitted by an A major macroharmony (i.e. the scale from which prolongational harmonies in A are derived) that ‘linger[s] in our memory’.⁹⁵ When these penumbras pass off, however, the renewed brightness of A major might be felt all the more powerfully.⁹⁶

Harrison similarly insists that chromatic harmonies need not be rationalised exclusively as products of voice leading which are indifferent to the process of instantiating a key. He claims that the ‘fundamental sensations of harmonic tonality could be separated from the sounding entities traditionally produced by those sensations’ by the end of the nineteenth century.⁹⁷ In other words, chromatic triads (no matter the exact manner of their derivation) can still *function* as subdominant, dominant, and tonic entities in more densely chromatic musical contexts, owing to the scale degrees they share in common with these diatonic harmonies.⁹⁸ *Pace* Harrison, however, I will follow Kopp in suggesting that chromatic mediants are better defined in terms of their own particular harmonic characteristics (which result from their distinctive roots) than they are as deformations of tonic, subdominant, and dominant functions, even if it might be said that some of them are similarly flavoured.⁹⁹ This is because fifth-based relationships are emphasised (either by literal presentation or through frustrated expectation) in the Romance’s foreground, but not in the

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, italics in the original, p. 504.

⁹⁵ Dmitri Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 104.

⁹⁶ Speaking more broadly, Harper-Scott opines that the ‘inheritance of historic subjectivity in the contemporary listener, which is still conditioned by nursery rhymes, hymns, pop songs, and so on’, makes it likely that we will still hear tonally, even in genuinely non-tonal situations: ‘Review’, 393. It is the job of analysis to represent this phenomenological aspect of music, as tonality is a culturally-conditioned form of perception, which exists in the mind of the listener, as well as a form of objective structure, abstracted from a historically narrow sample of pieces.

⁹⁷ Harrison, *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music*, p. 11.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹⁹ Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations*, pp. 16–17.

background, which divides the octave into even major thirds. Parsing chromatic mediants as distortions of diatonic entities would thus soften the effect of the syntactic conflict between structural levels, which is essential to the movement's tonal meaning.

§1.3.4 Conclusions

One of the most important points developed in Suzannah Clark's *Analyzing Schubert* is that we have it wrong if we assume that music is an object to which analysis simply *happens*. We can use particular works, especially those associated with transitional moments in music history – the loosening of common-practice rules, resulting in a harmonic world that was no longer conventionally tonal, but not yet in anyway non-tonal or polytonal, for example – to analyse the claims of various music-theoretical systems. As she puts it: 'Instead of following conventional habits of reading Schubert against models of music theory, I use Schubert to question the theoretical assumptions in the models'.¹⁰⁰

In my analysis of Elgar's Romance, I have attempted to use this movement to interrogate and even to invert one of Schenker's central tenets: namely, that chromaticism is an 'illusion of the foreground'. My relatively conventional Schenkerian analyses demonstrated that the middle section's B_♭ major is too weak to be a convincing tonicisation: that is to say, its existence is of an epiphenomenal, foreground variety. This leaves the way open for a Riemannian/Koppian analysis, which makes better sense of the movement's middle- and background structure. Chromaticism is primary; diatonicism is secondary.

This does not imply, however (*pace* Cohn) that the movement is non-tonal. Through theoretical explication of Elgar's poetic metaphor, I have attempted to provide evidence for his view that chromatic mediants, such as those which are prolonged as background waystations in the Romance, may be regarded as extending the power of a tonic into new areas of pitch space.¹⁰¹ My retention of a Schenkerian

¹⁰⁰ Suzannah Clark, *Analyzing Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 269–270.

¹⁰¹ Harper-Scott interprets this development in music history in explicitly political terms, by way of a comparison with the nineteenth-century European colonial project, in which 'Chords I, IV and V (Great Britain, France and Germany)' are described as having acquired 'hexatonic colonies': 'Review', 398–399. Through the colonisation of pitch space, 'the imperial centre of tonality could therefore always assure total control over these spaces at the same time that it allowed music to move quite freely through all of them'. While there is not space here to unpack fully the implications of such a claim, its

style notation for the background in Figure 1.32 well represents such tonic prolongation. Even subdominant and dominant functions might be forsaken. For Elgar, a tonic and its chromatic mediants are enough to build a satisfying tonality, as they are capable of offsetting a tonal centre in idiosyncratic yet direct ways. The tonic is freed to contemplate its reflection in the cascading droplets thrown off by its waterwheel.

Despite frequent statements to the contrary, the Romance cannot be reduced to a mere juxtaposition of two harmonic idiolects, isolated from one another in different formal sections. Indeed, the apparent schism between old and new is a phantasmagoria thrown off by a more singular, late nineteenth-century tonal process. This apparent contradiction between foreground and background is a perfect example of ‘the difference of look and sound’ that Elgar was to speak about in the first movement of the same Sonata.¹⁰² Elgar invoked this binary in his reply to Ernest Newman’s review of the work’s premiere in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 Apr. 1919. For Newman, ‘many a passage that looks a little unimpressive on paper turns out to be singularly impressive in performance’.¹⁰³ While this comment refers to examples of sparse instrumentation, which sound far fuller in practice than one might have imagined on the basis of score reading alone, the unusually abstract tone of Elgar’s comment makes it a useful conceptual framework within which to think about the relationship between foreground and background. The musical text, conceived synchronically as an abstract, chromatic structure, disclosed through close reading (*‘Look’*), can be separated out from the impressions of diatonicism it might inspire in an auditor when realised diachronically in performance (*‘Sound’*). While Schenker’s concept of foreground illusions may sometimes appear procrustean to musicologists, it seems (at least in this case) to have been an active part of Elgar’s musical thinking and compositional process. The ‘slow movement’s’ diatonic *sound* dissimulates its chromatic *look*.

This hermeneutic insight affords a partial clarification of Elgar’s oblique relationship with modernism. Peter Howarth’s work on the Georgian poets is useful in

inclusion provides demonstration enough that music theory, even at its most abstract, can be a useful tool with which to interrogate and think through broader historical issues.

¹⁰² Cited in Moore, *Elgar*, p. 739.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

this regard. As he has it, ‘not only did modernism introduce new styles and languages for poetry, it also ensured that *there could be no way to hear the old ones in the same way*’.¹⁰⁴ A similar argument could be made for the Romance and its relationship to musical modernism. Its materials seem more indebted to Wagner and to Schubert than to Stravinsky or to Schoenberg, and yet this movement is *heard* as representing an ideal, uncorrupted diatonicism when it is manifestly chromatic at the level of background structure. While modernism might not have been smuggled in among the Romance’s materials, then, it has distorted critics’ understandings of what is consonant and what is dissonant.

¹⁰⁴ Peter Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), my italics, p. 3.

Chapter 2:

Elgar's approach to sonata form

Having extensively considered Elgar's attitude to tonality in 1918 in Chapter 1, I now look to address his approach to sonata form during the same period. Section 2.1 provides justification for my use of *Formenlehre* models, synonymous in the twenty-first century with the theoretical approaches of William Caplin, James Hepokoski, and Warren Darcy, as the basis for interpreting form in Elgar's chamber music.¹ My argument is based on three interrelated points: 1) Elgar was well versed in music theory: he owned, annotated, and borrowed technical terms from various textbooks, all of which deal with sonata-form models in some degree of technical specificity; 2) he had actively analysed the form and key-schemes of a number of sonata-form movements as part of his early musical training, and continued to discuss form analytically in later life as part of his Peyton lectures; and 3) *Formenlehre* provided a horizon of understanding drawn on by early reviewers of Elgar's music in their critiques of his new works: the reification of diverse formal practices in textbooks, as well as the establishment of a musical canon of regularly performed concert works, had become important parts of the early twentieth-century British context in which music was both made and heard.

Sections 2.2 and 2.3 present close readings of the final and first movements of Elgar's Violin Sonata, Op. 82, respectively. These movements display polarised attitudes to sonata form, capturing neatly Elgar's relationship to tradition both at its most creative and its most conservative.

Section 2.2 argues that the sheer ubiquity of dominant *Stufen* in the concert-hall repertory of the early twentieth century had numbed listeners to its structurally dissonant quality, its having become something of a consonant cliché;² the Violin

¹ The key texts are William Caplin's *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and James Hepokoski's and Warren Darcy's *Elements of Sonata Theory: Types, Norms, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

² The concept of 'structural dissonance' is outlined in Charles Rosen's *Sonata Forms* (New York, London: W. W. Norton 1988): 'The exposition of a sonata form presents the thematic material and articulates the movement from tonic to dominant in various ways so that it takes on the character of a polarization or opposition. The essential character of this opposition may be defined as a large-scale

Sonata's finale seeks to 'translate' the dominant into a more modern kind of musical language so that it might be perceived as a genuine dissonance. More technically put: where a tonicisation of the structural dominant might be expected at the end of the exposition, after a prolongation of a pre-dominant V/V throughout the S group, Elgar instead saturates the foreground with augmented triads which resolve to major consonances as part of a descending, seemingly sequential gesture. This passage is extremely dissonant and it is difficult not to hear aimless wandering where one might have expected a renewed burst of teleological drive. However, when the passage is examined more closely, it becomes apparent that it is scaffolded by a descending E Lydian scale in the bass; there is order to be found among disorder. This scale has the same macroharmonic content as the dominant key area: that is to say, the sum total of all its pitches (E F# G# A# B C# D#) produces the same diatonic collection as E major's structural dominant (i.e. B major). As such, while it is not *heard* as a dominant, it can still be thought of as an oblique reference to it at a more abstract, architectonic level. In short, this passage puts the dissonance back in 'structural dissonance', but still provides a middleground reference to the dominant (or, at the very least, a predicate of dominant-ness, manifested in this instance by a re-ordered presentation of its macroharmony) which allows it to remain structural.

Besides the use of this strange dominant substitute, however, Elgar's adherence to *Formenlehre* principles up until this point is nearly absolute. As such, I claim that the Lydian anomaly at the end of the exposition deserves to be read as a 'deformation' of Classical precedent. This interpretation has hermeneutic ramifications. More broadly, Elgar's compositional strategy to 'translate' fundamental sonata-form concepts into modern musical materials might be seen to have much in common with a new style of translation that was being pioneered by Ezra Pound in the early twentieth century. I focus on Pound's *Cathay* (1915), a creative 'translation' of ancient Chinese poetry, as my illustrative example. More specifically, the deformational Lydian anomaly's motivic content provides an allusion to the 'Bliss' motif at the end of the first act of Wagner's *Die Walküre*, which represents the moment in which Sieglinde and Siegmund fall under one another's spell and commit

dissonance: the material played outside of the tonic (i.e., in the second group) is dissonant with respect to the centre of stability, or tonic. Sonata style did not invent this concept of a *dissonant* section, but it was the first style to make it the generating force of an entire movement', p. 229.

themselves to an incestuous and adulterous relationship. The resultant clash between love and law is represented aptly by Elgar's transgression of the formal expectations and rules described in *Formenlehre* textbooks.

In Section 2.3, I argue that the Violin Sonata's first movement does not attempt to innovate in sonata form at all, but rather emulates the formal approaches of Schumann and Brahms. Crucial to the compositional strategies of these mid-to-late nineteenth-century German composers is the way in which they sometimes complicate the teleological narrative inherent to sonata form by making ambiguous its underlying key scheme.³ This is often achieved through tonal pairing,⁴ whereby no harmony is allowed to be tonicised explicitly and each provisional tonic is drawn into a colloquy with another closely related harmony, so that it becomes difficult to divine which of them is structural and which is decorative.

While it is unlikely that Schumann, who was one of the first to pursue this technique so exhaustively, would have regarded himself as 'deforming' Beethovenian formal practice – Joel Lester has shown in great detail that Schumann's approach to form was a potpourri of different influences, inclusive of Hummel's music just as much as Beethoven's⁵ – Elgar was writing at a time when much music was coming to be defined negatively in terms of Beethovenian models.⁶ It was perhaps for this very reason, however, that the strategies exemplified by Schumann's music might have been so attractive to Elgar, insofar as they provided an attractive means of subverting

³ As Hepokoski and Darcy describe it, 'a sonata dramatizes a purely musical plot that has a beginning (P, the place from where it sets out with a specific tonal-rhetorical aim in mind), a middle (including a set of diverse musical adventures), and a generic conclusion of resolution and confirmation (the ESC and subsequent music)': see *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 251.

⁴ This point is pursued at length in a number of Peter H. Smith's articles and book chapters. See his: 'The Drama of Tonal Pairing in Chamber Music of Schumann and Brahms' in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning* (eds. Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp. 252–290; 'Tonal Pairing and Monotonicity in Instrumental Forms of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms' in *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 2013): 77–102; 'Associative Harmony, Tonal Pairing, and Middleground Structure in Schumann's Sonata Expositions' in *Rethinking Schumann*, eds. Roe-Min Koh and Laura Tunbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 236–262; and 'Harmonies Heard from Afar: Tonal Pairing, Formal Design, and Cyclical Integration in Schumann's A-minor Violin Sonata, op. 105', *Theory and Practice*, Vol. 34 (2009): 47–86.

⁵ Joel Lester, 'Robert Schumann and Sonata Forms', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1995): 189–210.

⁶ See, for example, Donald Francis Tovey's implicitly Beethovenian critique of Schumann's large-scale forms: 'Schumann is a master of epigram. His ideas normally take the shape of gnomic sayings. [...] Large forms imply the expansion of initial ideas by development; and development is the very thing that an epigram will not bear': *Essays in Musical Analysis: Symphonies and other Orchestral Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1981 [1935–9]), p. 470.

the reified sonata narrative laid out in the models of theorists contemporary to Elgar, such as John Stainer, Ernst Pauer, and Henry Gadsby. For Schumann, numerous sonata-form types (and, concomitantly, different kinds of musical narrative) existed side by side: composers could select aspects from each of them, depending on the particular kind of musical story which they had opted to tell. For Elgar, by contrast, there existed in the early twentieth century an increasingly hegemonic concept of form, which Schumannesque practices could meaningfully subvert. The techniques had not necessarily changed, but the contexts of their reception had.

While combining sonata form with tonal pairing might not have been forward thinking in 1918, if considered in terms of musical language alone, I argue that the context of war had imbued this traditional hybrid with potentially modern and disquieting meanings.⁷ To emphasise this, I discuss Elgar's attenuation of sonata-form teleology in relation to the general scepticism a number of writers felt towards traditional kinds of narrative in the inter- and post-war periods, after trying to capture their experiences of war-time conflict (either real or imagined) in conventional literary forms. While some figures, such as Pound and T. S. Eliot, opted to create new languages as a means to express such disaffection, this was by no means the only possible response. In the same way that one does not need to use a computer to write a novel about the modern human condition – a typewriter or a quill will do just as well – so old forms can be sensitive to modern concerns and speak to us about them lucidly.⁸ In pursuing this line of argument, I hope to demonstrate that Elgar contributed meaningfully to the tradition of war art.

Section 2.1: Elgar and *Formenlehre*

One of the most common criticisms levelled at *Formenlehre* analysis is the perceived tendency of certain theorists (particularly Hepokoski and Darcy) to posit formal archetypes, or 'norms', which they take music to be in dialogue with. While

⁷ See also Daniel M. Grimley, 'A smiling with a sigh': the chamber music and works for strings' in *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, eds. Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 120–138, particularly p. 138. Grimley also makes a similar point about Elgar's use of typically romantic and/or quasi-liturgical materials in 'For the Fallen': see his 'Structures of mourning in *The Spirit of England*' in *Elgar Studies*, eds. J. P. E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 220–237.

⁸ This analogy is borrowed from J. P. E. Harper-Scott's *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life* (London: ABRSM, 2007), p. 87.

unproblematic in the abstract, adopting a dialogic approach can produce dubious analytical results if the analyst's assumed 'norm' is not grounded historically in the relevant tradition or repertoire. In a classic example of synecdoche, the 'norms' immanent in a relatively small number of canonic, Austro-Germanic works are sometimes taken to be representative of compositional practice as a whole across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹ The works of so-called marginal composers, however, might draw on the posited norm only partially (if at all), while also engaging with a number of other national and/or generic formal traditions which the former theory is unable properly to account for.

In interpreting Elgar's use of form, I look to avoid positing a historically non-specific set of background norms against which his music will be read by adopting Julian Horton's suggestion to 'reconstruct as far as possible the circumstances in reception history that condition the development of a form'.¹⁰ Elgar wrote his late chamber music after the Western-art-music canon had been fully established: he was familiar both with those composers whose reputations had been enshrined in the concert hall, as well as the dictates of music-theory textbooks, best exemplified in the British context by the writings of John Stainer, Ernst Pauer, and Henry Gadsby.¹¹ Crucially, Elgar was sensitive to the tension between these two things (i.e. repertory and rule) and played on it to great effect. In light of this, one might argue that it would be ahistorical *not to read* Elgar in terms of the *Formenlehre* traditions and the canonical repertory of his day.¹²

⁹ This is the charge levelled at Hepokoski's and Darcy's *Elements* by a number of scholars: see Paul Wingfield, 'Beyond "Norms and Deformations": Towards a Theory of Sonata Form as Reception History', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2008): 137–177; William Drabkin, 'Mostly Mozart', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 148, No. 1901 (2007): 89–100; Julian Horton, 'John Field and the Alternative History of Concerto First-Movement Form', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 92, No. 1: 43–83; Steven vande Moortele, 'In Search of Romantic Form', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 32, No. 3: 404–431 and *The Romantic Overture and Musical Form from Rossini to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); as well as Markus Neuwirth, 'Joseph Haydn's "witty" play on Hepokoski and Darcy's *Elements of Sonata Theory*', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*, Vol. 8, No. 1 <https://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/586.aspx>.

¹⁰ Julian Horton, 'Formal Type and Formal Function in the Postclassical Piano Concerto' in *Formal Functions in Perspective: Essays on Musical Form from Haydn to Adorno*, pp. 77–122, at p. 119.

¹¹ The texts in question, all of which Elgar owned as well as sometimes annotating and borrowing technical ideas from, are: John Stainer, *Composition* (London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1880); Ernst Pauer, *Musical Forms* (London: Novello, Ewer and Co., 1878); and Henry Gadsby, 'Sonata' in *A Dictionary of Musical Terms*, eds. John Stainer and W. A. Barrett (London: Novello, Ewer and Co., 1898).

¹² Other scholars have made similar claims for music composed in the two or three decades prior to the completion of Elgar's chamber music. Peter H. Smith argues, for example, that 'Brahms, unlike his

The purpose of the remainder of this section is to lay out abstractly three important factors which might reasonably be thought to have influenced Elgar's reception of sonata form: 1) Elgar's knowledge of and engagement with existent theories of form; 2) his demonstrable proclivity for analysis; and 3) the formative importance of the *Formenlehre* tradition on the critical reception of Elgar's works in the concert hall. (NB: More specific allusions to the styles or techniques of individual composers are discussed in the context of the analytical segments that make up Sections 2.2 and 2.3 of this chapter.)

§2.1.1 Elgar and Theory

Elgar displayed a self-conscious understanding of the relationship of his own music to the theoretical and pedagogical dogma of the early twentieth century. This was almost certainly the result of close reading on his part. As Ian Parrott puts it, 'during his teens and into his twenties [...] he carefully read a number of [theory] books',¹³ to which he would have had easy access through his father's music shop. In light of such detailed study, Elgar commented in 1902 that 'I cherish a profound respect for the old theorists. They were useful in their day, but they were not entitled to lay down hard and fast rules for all composers to the end of time'.¹⁴ Writing in the same year in an article for *The Strand*, however, he was perhaps more candid, classifying textbooks as 'repellent. But I read them and I still exist'.¹⁵ Despite any misgivings he might have had, he at least remained informed; even if he were attempting to present himself as a 'natural' and non-academic composer by repudiating theory, he could not bring himself to dismiss it entirely.

Viennese precursors, lived after generations of *Formenlehre* writers had codified what they took to be the defining characteristics of sonata form, a practice that resulted in the fossilisation of Classical conventions in the eyes of many late Romantics. Sonata-form composition was a much more self-conscious endeavour for Brahms than for his predecessors'. See his: *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in his Werther Quartet* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 109–110.

¹³ Ian Parrott, 'Elgar's Harmonic Language' in *Elgar Studies*, ed. Raymond Monk (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), pp. 35–45.

¹⁴ Robert J. Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: Forgotten Books, 2017 [1904]), p. 32.

¹⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 39.

Peter Dennison has helpfully catalogued those theory books which Elgar owned at the time of his death.¹⁶ On inspection of these texts, as well as the available evidence that Elgar had consulted them, it becomes obvious that he probably knew well examples of ‘textbook sonata form’. To take one example, John Stainer’s *Composition* lays out the trajectory of a sonata as follows:

Introduction [*an introduction is generally of a broad, mysterious character, and of indefinite form]

1. Enunciation of first principal theme followed by a ‘link-episode’ or ‘interlude-portion’ [i.e. a modern transition] modulating into closely allied key. Then follows—
2. Enunciation of second principal theme followed by short episode framed to allow of a *repeat* from the beginning. (‘Repeat’ not compulsory, but where it takes place a double bar is of course used.) [End of first division.]
3. Development-portion, called also the ‘Free-fantasia-portion,’ and the *Durchführung*. At the close of this follows—
4. Repetition of first principal theme (called also the *Reprise*) and followed by the ‘link-episode’ so changed that it does *not* modulate out of the key but leads to—
5. Repetition of second principal *transposed, from the key in which it first appeared, into the key of Tonic.*
6. Coda.¹⁷

Stainer even goes on to clarify the common modulations inherent in the form: ‘When a movement is in a major key, the second principal theme generally appears in the key of the dominant, being of course approached through the dominant of the new key; but it also may be enunciated in the key of the major third above, or major or minor third below, &c.’¹⁸ (NB: Stainer seems almost to be appealing here to the concept of first- and second-level defaults which characterise Hepokoski and Darcy’s *Elements*.) Stainer goes on to clarify that ‘when a minor-key is chosen for such a movement, the

¹⁶ See Peter Dennison, Appendix 3, ‘Elgar’s Musical Apprenticeship’ in *Elgar Studies*, ed. Raymond Monk (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), pp. 1–34, at p. 31.

¹⁷ Stainer, *Composition*, italics in the original, p. 127.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

second principal theme is generally enunciated in the key of the *relative major*.¹⁹ When it is brought back in the reprise, the second principal theme might return in tonic minor *or* major.

Stainer explicitly recognised, however, that while prescriptions such as these were of use to a student, they were by no means the final word on the matter. As he clarifies, ‘this is not the place to give an account of the immense variety of modifications or variations which this form has undergone at the hands of the great masters. It is absolutely necessary that the student should analyse the works themselves’.²⁰ In the movements analysed in this chapter, however, Elgar often stuck fast to the defaults laid out in Stainer’s primer. Rather than ignore the rules completely (as Stainer effectively gives his students licence to do), he chooses to deconstruct them from the inside.

Ernst Pauer, the author of another textbook Elgar owned, espoused a very similar model of sonata form, which is tabulated below:

<p>First Part.</p> <p>Order of subjects and their treatment: Chief or principal subject, transition to second subject. Final group [i.e. a closing zone or group of codettas]. Repeat.</p>	<p>Middle Part.</p> <p>Thematic working out or developments of both of the subjects of the first part; called also the Free Fantasia, because unrestricted as to form.</p>	<p>Repetition.</p> <p>Chief subject. Transition to second group. Final group. Recollection [i.e. coda, which Pauer describes as ‘summing up, with concluding thoughts’]. Finale.</p>
<p>Key.</p> <p>Tonic. Modulation into the dominant or a related major key; or rarely, if the chief subject is in a minor key, to the minor key of a fifth above.</p>	<p>Free modulations return to the tonic.</p>	<p>Reign of the tonic.</p>

Table 2.1: Ernst Pauer’s tabulation of a typical sonata-form design²¹

While essentially the same as Stainer’s, Pauer’s model includes additional descriptions of coda materials at the end of the exposition, and is more emphatic in its rhetoric: the

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 129.

²¹ Pauer, *Musical Forms*, p. 117.

notion that a tonic should ‘reign’ monarchically in the recapitulation is particularly striking.

It is almost certain that Elgar had read both of these texts, which he possessed bound together as a single volume, in detail. Parrott observes that Elgar was sometimes critical of the latter text in his marginal annotations,²² and Elgar demonstrated a working familiarity with the former: he described the Welsh Tune from his Introduction and Allegro, Op. 47 (1905) as a ‘link’,²³ which is (I argue) a rhythmic concept derived from *Composition*.²⁴ Another account of form in Elgar’s possession was Henry Gadsby’s. He writes that:

the first movement [of a four-movement sonata] should have two themes, unlike each other in character; for example, one vigorous and one spirited, the other tender and expressive; and each should be capable of varied treatment. After the first subject has been well announced, a modulation into the key of the dominant, if the subject starts in the major, and into the relative major if the subject commences in the minor, should be made. *In either case the second subject must be heard in the changed key before the half close or perfect cadence concludes the first part of the allegro.* In the second portion of the *allegro*, a greater amount of licence is permitted, this section often partaking of the nature of a free fantasia. The two principal themes are subjected to all kinds of treatment, and are introduced in various keys at the will of the composer. Having exhausted all the chosen examples, the first subject must now enter in its entirety, then the second subject should be heard, this time in the tonic or key in which the movement is written, if that mode be major; or it may appear in the key of the tonic major, if the mode be minor; but the episode and cadence which are to usher in the conclusion of this section, must be in the tonic key.

²² Parrott, ‘Elgar’s Harmonic Language’, p. 40.

²³ Quoted in James Hepokoski, ‘Gaudery, romance, and the “Welsh Tune”’: Introduction and Allegro’ in *Elgar Studies*, eds. J. P. E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 135–171 at p. 156.

²⁴ The relevant passage is as follows: ‘When it is desired to unite two sections by a musical progression of one or more bars (generally, however, of *one* bar), the added portion is considered as external to the rhythmic form, and has been appropriately termed a *link*. Such links are most commonly found where there is a change of key [...]. But “links” are always so clearly distinguishable [...]. They are sometimes embedded in extended passages of great interest, where their presence, unless duly explained, gives some trouble to the young student of rhythm’, Stainer, *Composition*, p. 90.

Sometimes a coda, formed of a portion of the first subject is added, and the movement ends in the key first proposed.²⁵

While repeating many features of the previous two models, Gadsby places new emphasis on the necessity of a cadence to end the first part of the form (i.e. the exposition). This chimes with modern-day notions of what Hepokoski and Darcy term essential expositional closure (EEC). Similarly, he is more explicit about the topical contrast between primary and secondary themes.

Given the evidence available, it seems highly likely both that Elgar was aware of the ‘rules’ of sonata form in the early twentieth century, and that those rules bore striking resemblance to some of the principal elements of Hepokoski’s and Darcy’s Sonata Theory, particularly their conceptions both of first- and second-level defaults and ‘essential’ cadences.

§2.1.2 Elgar and Analysis

Elgar’s interest in form was not only theoretical, however, but also analytical and practical. During the early days of his musical auto-didacticism, for example, Elgar studied in depth the formal proportions of the music he most admired. Writing for the *Strand Magazine* in May 1904, he reflected on his early approach to learning the craft of composition:

I [...] ruled a score for the same instruments and with the same number of bars as Mozart’s G minor Symphony, and in that framework I wrote a symphony, following as far as possible the same outline in the themes and the same modulation. I did this on my own initiative, as I was groping in the dark after the light, but looking back after thirty years I don’t know any discipline from which I learned so much.²⁶

His interest in proportion and form continued into his later life. He delivered a number of technical lectures on music, the most famous of which was his Peyton

²⁵ Gadsby, ‘Sonata’, my italics, p. 405.

²⁶ Cited in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 80.

lecture on Brahms' Third Symphony in 1905. The analytical substance of his argument is now lost to us, but it is clear that his approach was straightforwardly formalist: an audience member reported that Elgar 'pointed out the principles on which the movements were constructed and the themes by which they were knit together'.²⁷

In other words, while Elgar was sometimes sceptical of abstract theories, he never eschewed technical analysis. He might famously have claimed to pluck music out of the air from the sounds of nature, but he was equally prepared to think in terms of architectonics and thematic processes.

§2.1.3 The influence of *Formenlehre* on contemporary reviews

The perceived dialogue (or lack thereof) between common formal archetypes and Elgar's individual compositional voice was essential to many contemporary reviews of Elgar's chamber music, which relied on allusions to *Formenlehre* as an interpretative crutch. The music critic of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, for example, found the first movement's dutiful alignment with formal tradition oppressive: 'the trammels of "sonata form" seem to have cramped him and the music, though carrying a bold opening theme, seems to lack spontaneity'.²⁸ In other words, this opening sonata allegro was too reminiscent of any number of earlier sonata-form movements; Elgar had not adapted the form sufficiently for his own purposes.

The Scotsman's music critic, by contrast, believed that 'these three works are not only among the most lovable music composed in this century; they display how capable the sonata form is of saying new things at the bidding of a composer who has something new to say'.²⁹ L. Dutton Green espoused a similar view: the Sonata 'seems like a protest against the far-fetched devices of the ultra-moderns — it seems to say: See what can be done yet with the old forms, the old methods of composing, the old scales: if you only know how to do it your work may yet be new, yet original, yet

²⁷ An audience member's account quoted in Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and other Lectures*, ed. Percy M. Young (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968), p. 104.

²⁸ Author unknown, 'Elgar's Violin Sonata', *Sheffield Daily Press*, Saturday, 20 December 1919, p. 9.

²⁹ Author's name unknown (London music critic for *The Scotsman*), 'Elgar Celebration Concert' in *The Scotsman*, Monday, 5 December 1932, p. 10.

beautiful'.³⁰ According to such accounts, Elgar had produced a masterful blend of tradition and individual talent through his use of sonata form (to borrow from the title of T. S. Eliot's influential essay).

The latter view was to be replicated in some later criticisms of the chamber works. Carol A. Fitzgerald and Brian W. Harvey, for example, emphasise Elgar's 'ingenious key-changing systems and modest but effective variations on classical architectural structures'.³¹ Ian Parrott, by contrast, argues that these 'modest' changes are actually sardonic in character. 'Instead of breaking away from the procedures of the past, Elgar now prefers to take sonata form with its system of keys and gently to break its rules—with a quiet chuckle to himself as he does so. [...] One cannot help believing that Elgar actually wanted to see the old fogies of the Germanic school wagging their heads ruefully at his misdeeds'.³² Ivor Keys takes a more extreme view. Writing of the opening movement of the Violin Sonata, he observes that 'the conservatism of the instrumental writing – as though Debussy and Ravel had never existed, let alone Schoenberg – might lead us to expect orthodox destinations in form ... [but] the music takes care almost entirely to defeat this expectation'.³³ Whether Elgar is considered to adapt, to mock, or even to abandon, traditional forms, a sonata template lurks in the background as a means of making such readings possible.

§2.1.4 Provisional Conclusions

The preceding brief survey has ascertained three things about Elgar's relationship to sonata form: 1) Elgar was well versed in contemporary music theory and, concomitantly, various textbook sonata-form models; 2) he actively analysed the form and key-schemes of a number of sonata-form movements; and 3) critics (both old and new) directly interpret the relevant movements of Elgar's Violin Sonata in terms of

³⁰ Quoted in Grimley, 'A smiling with a sigh', p. 133. These quotations, used already on p. 27, are repeated here because of their importance to the argument of the current chapter: namely, that Elgar's use of sonata form in the Violin Sonata is in some sense novel.

³¹ Carol A. Fitzgerald and Brian W. Harvey, *Elgar, Vicat Cole and the Ghosts of Brinkwells* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2007), p. 136.

³² Ian Parrott, *Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1971), p. 80.

³³ Ivor Keys, "'Ghostly Stuff": The Brinkwells Music' in *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), pp. 108–120, at p. 110.

their own conceptions of a ‘textbook’ sonata form, whether they judge him playfully to misalign with it or unimaginatively to coincide with it.

In light of this, it seems reasonable to suppose that the *Formenlehre* models of Caplin, and of Hepokoski and Darcy, which refine the general observations of earlier textbooks with greater levels of technical detail drawn from a larger body of specific pieces, can (where relevant) help to shed light on Elgar’s use of form in the late chamber music. This chapter is not a defence of *Formenlehre* per se – many criticisms of its universalising aspects are well made – but of the application of particular *Formenlehre* concepts, such as the ‘deformation’ of standardised key schemes and/or essential cadences, to particular passages of music. Elgar did not subscribe to his own brand of homogenous ‘Sonata Theory’, derived from all of the textbooks he had ever read and all the pieces he had ever played. (Such a chimera would no doubt be helplessly self-contradictory.) Rather, he imagined sonata form in a more flexible way, picking and choosing from various models as he found useful for his expressive purposes, whether these were derived from textbooks or from the outputs of specific composers. (As we shall see in Sections 2.2 and 2.3, these different sources yield very different types of sonata form.) The analyst must do the same with his or her theoretical concepts if they are adequately to explain Elgar’s music. If a concept such as ‘failed exposition’ or ‘tonic–dominant polarity’ is used, it is not because I think they are valid for all ages, but because the local harmonic writing, rhetorical mode, and thematic profile of a particular passage suggest it as an interpretative option, and because Elgar’s enculturation makes such a reading generally plausible.

Section 2.2: ‘Make it New!’: a ‘translation’ of the dominant (Violin Sonata, iii)

The E major finale of Elgar’s Violin Sonata, Op. 82, completed on 1 October 1918, utilises formal and tonal principles from the nineteenth century. Elgar does not showcase these in the manner of a conservative museum curator. Rather, his approach to them is, as I hinted in my introduction, that of a modern kind of ‘translator’. This movement might be said to translate the dominant into a more modern musical

language, which emphasises not only its traditional structural importance, but also its originally ‘dissonant’ character. The latter quality had been dulled both by contemporary listeners’ over-exposure to the dominant over the course of the last century and by inevitable comparison with the newer dissonances of modernism. In other words, Elgar sought to ‘make it [i.e. the dominant] new’.

This phrase is borrowed from the modernist poet and philologist, Ezra Pound. While it was first used by Pound in 1934 as the title of a book of essays, it well describes an attitude to poetic translation which had been fully evident since his *Cathay* (1915) – a set of creative translations focusing on the work of the eighth-century Chinese poet, Li Bo.³⁴ They are creative insofar as they do not display fidelity to the style and syntax of the originals. As the literary scholar Peter Howarth puts it,

Pound translates [his sources] into limpid English free verse, with lopped-off rhymeless lines stretching out into silence, whereas his sources are staccato, carefully patterned and not meant to be read in a linear fashion. [...] Pound lost the feel of the Chinese as a contemporary of Rihaku [this is the Japanese rendering of Li Bo’s name] might have read it and gave it a specifically modern feeling of alienation.³⁵

Such distortions, however, are not the result of accidental carelessness or an intentionally disrespectful vandalism. Rather, Pound attempted to dig behind the words to get at something of the quality of experience they were intended to invoke: an experience which might require new words, rhythms, or syntax, if it was to be properly rendered in a different time or context. To use Pound’s own words, his method emphasised ‘the general emotions of the poems, their atmosphere or intensity’, rather than their ‘direct verbal meanings’.³⁶

³⁴ For a brief history both of the Chinese originals and Pound’s protracted journey to discovering and translating them, see Ira B. Nadel, *Cathay: Ezra Pound’s Orient* (London: Penguin Books, 1915).

³⁵ Peter Howarth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 42.

³⁶ Ezra Pound, ‘Books Current’, *The Future*, Vol. 2, No. 11 (Nov. 1918), p. 287. Pound famously defined poetry as ‘a sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations, not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres, and the like, but equations for human emotions’: see his Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance: An Attempt to Define Somewhat the Charm of the Pre-Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1910), p. 14.

The cultural critic, John Berger, processes the complexity immanent in this idea in a particularly lucid way:

True translation is not a binary affair between two languages, but a triangular affair, the third point of the triangle being what lay behind the words of the original text before it was written. True translation demands a return to the pre-verbal. We read and reread the words of the original text in order to penetrate through them, to reach, to touch the vision or experience which prompted them. We then gather up what we have found there and take this quivering almost wordless ‘thing’ and place it behind the language into which it needs to be translated. And now the principal task is to persuade the host language to take in and welcome the ‘thing’ which is waiting to be articulated.³⁷

In the case of Pound’s *Cathay*, the ‘thing’ that is to be translated and conveyed to a new audience is often a feeling of exile and of being separated from one’s loved ones by great distances; much of the source material Pound chose was written by soldiers banished from their homelands. To return to Peter Howarth’s commentary on this collection,

the estranged and unresolved *feel* of Pound’s translated forms is now charged with the distances between husbands and wives in the First World War, and the cruel inability to count on any future that war forces on separated couples. Bringing these love-letters from a long-distant culture to print makes the reader experience in their sudden, unpredictable form the mixture of direct appeal and diffidence they are talking about, and the poetry rests in these sudden, sobering reverberations between then and now.³⁸

In light of such subtleties, it becomes apparent that the imperative to ‘make it new’ does not imply that translations should be modern for the sake of it, as part of some neophytic project in which history must be updated so as not to become old fashioned. Rather, as the Chinese literary scholar Ming Xie has noted, the philosophy behind Pound’s phrase encourages ‘the regrounding of the original work in a

³⁷ John Berger, *Confabulations* (London: Penguin, 2016), p. 4.

³⁸ Howarth, *Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry*, pp. 42–43.

contemporary sensibility in order to achieve, paradoxically, an historical understanding of the original, now newly situated in a later historical moment by the translator'.³⁹

The E major exposition of the Violin Sonata's finale demonstrates this process of 'regrounding' with particular clarity, as it translates a traditional dominant *Stufe* into a more modern musical language. While avoiding any literal statement of a cadentially crowned, diatonic V, Elgar does present the listener with an unusual middleground reference to the dominant in the closing zone, which takes the form of a descending E Lydian scale in the bass that reproduces B major's diatonic scale (albeit starting on $\hat{4}$ rather than $\hat{1}$). However, while this scale provides an essential means of structural connection between the secondary theme group and the development, it is not necessarily heard to be significant; it undergirds an extremely dissonant sequence of alternating augmented and major triads on the music's surface, which dominates one's hearing. In light of this, one might wonder at an attempt to explain the closing zone in terms of a dominant at all, but the surrounding music seems to demand such an interpretation. The passage in question is preceded by an extensive prolongation of V/V throughout the secondary-theme area (S) and we are thus led to expect that there will be some kind of strong tonicisation of V; it makes sense to interpret the closing zone's middleground scale as an oblique form of reference to one. Furthermore, the E Lydian bass line represents an outgrowth, at a middleground level, of some of the foreground Lydian inflections that colour the exposition's opening (P1). Like many of the classical major-mode sonata forms which so fascinated thinkers like Schenker, then, this movement displays a number of parallelisms between its various structural levels; the closing zone's middleground oddness is organically motivated and does not manifest formal rupture. It makes sense, therefore, to talk about the ways in which it satisfies the harmonic expectations generated by the materials which come before it.

Elgar's strange invocation of the dominant here might be understood as a form of Poundian translation for the following reasons: 1) the E Lydian scale provides an

³⁹ Ming Xie, 'Pound as Translator' in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 204–224, at pp. 216–217. This view is to be directly contrasted with the more orthodoxly philological view of history that dominated the late nineteenth century, which supposed that the truth of the past could be disclosed through rigorous fact collecting: see Carlos Riobó, 'The Spirit of Ezra Pound's Romance Philology: Dante's Ironic Legacy of the Contingencies', *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2002): 201–222, at 213.

oblique allusion to a general predicate of dominant-ness in the middleground, through the re-ordered presentation of B major's diatonic collection in the bass; and 2) the seemingly non-tonal quality of the passage's foreground allows the dominant once again to function as a genuine form of structural *dissonance* and thus avoids sounding like a dated, consonant cliché.⁴⁰ It is made new.

§2.2.1 Exposition

Schenkerian analysis discloses a fairly orthodox middleground frame across which the surface details of the primary and secondary themes are unfurled. As can be seen in Figure 2.1, much of the exposition is spent either evading or preparing the dominant. P1 articulates a I–V progression, which is interrupted by $\sharp VI$ at the beginning of P2.⁴¹ It becomes apparent that this harmony is only an apparent consonance, produced by a relative transformation of E major's minor subdominant (i.e. A minor): see the rising $G\flat$ – $G\sharp$ –A figure in the alto. When iv is sounded in its 'real' form at 40:13, we might expect it to function as a pre-dominant; it is even voiced in first inversion, so that the bass $C\flat$ might fall by semitone to a root-position B major triad, in the manner of a Phrygian cadence. Rather than resolving downwards, however, this $C\flat$ pushes upwards chromatically at 42:2 to $C\sharp$ and becomes the root of a pre-dominant half-diminished supertonic in B. This marks the beginning of S, the function of which is to prolong a middleground $F\sharp$ major triad as V/V (41:2–42:12). However, the passage indicated by the exclamation mark in Figure 2.1 (43:1–13) fails to provide the expected resolution to the global dominant, despite the strongly accented B in the bass with which it begins. The fifth of this initial V is raised by a semitone, thus producing a dissonant augmented triad, which resolves to a major chord as part of a descending chromatic sequence (not included in the reduction; see Figure 2.3 later on in the text). What sounds like a distorted V: EEC in prospect comes to sound like the beginning of a passage of non-tonal meandering in retrospect.

⁴⁰ Think of Debussy's claim that 'tonic and dominant had become empty shadows of use only to stupid children': *Debussy Letters*, ed. François Lesure and trans. Richard Nichols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 76–77.

⁴¹ I here cut against the convention, laid out in Hepokoski's and Darcy's *Elements*, of only notching up the integer attached to P after a PAC. The thematic character of P2 is wholly different from that which precedes; it is not part of a larger thematic structure (i.e. small ternary, expanded sentence, etc.). Furthermore, it emerges after an emphatically marked deceptive cadence. It is thus more helpful to label it as a new subsection within P.

The preceding G major chord at 44:1 might be heard to resuscitate the weakened dominant function first presented at 43:1 (i.e. it can be parsed as a V chord modified by a pL transformation). This reading is strengthened by the fact that the B augmented chord at 43:1 is overdetermined: it can also be spelt as G augmented (G B D#). Once D# is corrected to D \flat at 43:14, this allows for resolution to G major at 44:1, which is elided with the beginning of the development. Despite this, there seems to be no composing-out of B major's diatonic collection between 43:1 and 44:1, as there would be in a more orthodox tonicisation: scalar polarisation between tonic and dominant, so essential to an orthodox conception of sonata form, is absent.

Exposition **Dev.**

P1 P2 S Closing material P1

-:1-9 39:1|8 40:1|11 12|13|41:2 42:11|12 43:1-13|14 44:1

[a: III iv V i₃⁶ B/G augmented as pivot chord to B and G: B D# F# B D# G#

[b: ii⁷ V Ger⁶ V I₅ (!) Distorted V: EEC? Weak V substitute?

[E]: I V \flat VI (i.e. ivR) \rightarrow iv₃⁶ V⁷/V \rightarrow V_{#5} V_{+/G#} UFM VpL?

Figure 2.1: middleground graph, -:1–44:1

Despite this, I argue that the passage indicated by the exclamation mark – a weird kind of closing zone – still references the diatonic set of the dominant harmony (albeit in an oblique way), despite both its non-cadential and ultimately non-diatonic quality. To make sense of this seemingly paradoxical claim, we must return to the beginning of the movement, which foreshadows not only the emergence of the G major chord which begins the development, but also the idiosyncratic ‘composing out’ of the dominant between 43:1 and 13.

Rehearsal figures -:1 to 9 spell out a Mixolydian falling fourth progression from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{5}$ in the soprano (see Figure 2.2). $D\sharp$ (i.e. $\sharp\hat{7}/E$), however, is elaborated by a fifth descent into an inner voice between -:3 and 4, which prolongs G major; it has a Lydian flavour, owing to the $C\sharp$ ($\sharp\hat{4}/G$). The rising third progression between the tonic and the root of its upper-flat mediant in the tenor between -:1 and 4 can be seen to foreshadow the middleground third progression $E-F\sharp-G\sharp$ in Figure 2.1. As will be seen later, this motif recurs throughout the piece at a number of different structural levels. The descending variant of this third progression at -:5 to 9 utilises a major-mode II as a passing chord between $\sharp III$ and I, with the $A\sharp$ in the upper voice providing another dapple of Lydian colouring. Note that, in the score, a pedal E and a melodic $A\sharp$ are sustained as semibreves in the bass and soprano voices, respectively, so as to emphasise the $\sharp 4$ interval. It is the macroharmonic content of this mode when rooted on E, which later provides Elgar with the ability to reference the expected dominant EEC, despite the absence of a true dominant *Stufe*.

Figure 2.2: voice-leading reduction, -:1–40:1

In prospect, the arrival on the note of B in three different octaves at 43:1 (see Figure 2.3), after the extensive prolongation of V/V from 41:2 to 42:12, might suggest to a listener that there has been a cadence in the structural dominant. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that this note functions locally as the fifth of an E major chord. This $6/4$ does not resolve cadentially: its upper voices are not appoggiaturas which temporarily displace B major's third and fifth. Indeed, the following music serves to

dissipate all sense of dominant arrival; we are presented instead with a passage of extreme dissonance, full of parallel fifths and augmented triads, in which tonality seems to be suspended. However, the linear descent in the bass spells out (if one allows for enharmonic equivalence) every degree of E Lydian. Crucially, E Lydian shares its specific collection of pitches with *B major*, meaning that the diatonic collection of a tonicised dominant (i.e. B major) is still being ‘composed out’, albeit in a highly idiosyncratic way, as part of what can be described as a macroharmonic modulation, in which one note in a group of seven diatonic pitches is raised by a semitone (i.e. E, F \sharp , G \sharp , A, B, C \sharp , D \sharp becomes E, F \sharp , G \sharp , A \sharp , B, C \sharp , D \sharp).⁴² The fourth descent in the upper voice from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{5}$ of B major might also be thought to suggest the haunting presence of a dominant (see 43:1 to 5). Crucially, though, these oblique references to V exist only architecturally or intellectually; aurally speaking, Elgar chooses to foreground the dissonant (as opposed to structural) quality of his chosen ‘structural dissonance’, although both of these features are essential to understanding this passage’s role within the form.

43:1 3 4 5 7 8 13 14 44:1

Beats: Strong, Weak, Strong, Weak, etc.

Semitone transposition disrupts whole-tone sequence; calls special attention to A \sharp

Implied parallels: 5 — 5 — 5 — 5 — 5
+ E + D \sharp + C \sharp + B + A \sharp + G \sharp (F \sharp - 3rd of D)

B (V/E): I \sharp ₅ — I \sharp ₅

E: V \sharp ₅ → I \sharp ₄ (not a cadential 6/4)

Distorted Aimless
V: EEC wandering

Prospect Retrospect

Recurring 3-prg: E ————— F \sharp ————— G \sharp

Descending E Lydian mode in bass (enharmonically disguised) = macroharmonic substitute for V

V \sharp _{3/4}III + UFM (V/Ger)

Figure 2.3: voice-leading reduction, 43:1–44:1

⁴² Schenker similarly emphasises the dominant quality of the tonic Lydian. The sharpening of $\hat{4}$ ‘betrays too clearly the intention of a chromatic alteration [i.e. as a tonicization of V], and it would not be warranted to accept it as a diatonic IV step in the frame of the system.’ See his *Harmony*, ed. Oswald Jones and trans. Elizabeth Mann Borgese (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980 [1906]), pp. 114–115.

W. H. Reed, a violinist who collaborated closely with Elgar in the composition of the Sonata and who performed its premiere, noted that

one would expect [this passage] to produce monotony, but it has not that effect for a moment: on the contrary, it has a soothing, comforting effect, with its smooth, swinging pulsation. One does not always want something exciting to be happening: it is very restful to sit down calmly at times and do nothing in particular for a short space, without boredom; and this is precisely the effect these figure repetitions produce on the listener, a reposeful mood of calm contentment.⁴³

The music from 43:1 to 44:1 achieves a twofold goal, then: 1) To ‘make new’ the dominant *Stufe*, so essential to the articulation of an orthodox, major-mode sonata form; and 2) To disassociate this polar harmony from the teleological, heroic drive that is the legacy of Beethoven’s middle-period style. The latter goal was particularly important, as these Beethovenian qualities had come to seem suspect by the time the work was first sent to the publishers on 1 October 1918, a full month before the end of the First World War.⁴⁴ Elgar had thus attempted to make his adoption of sonata-form procedure more palatable to modern aesthetic sensibilities, moulded anew in the crucible of wartime, while making prominent once again the dominant’s structurally dissonant quality: something which a straightforward cadence in the dominant no longer had the shock value to achieve.

§2.2.2 Development

It is possible to parse the development’s harmonic trajectory as being idiomatic for major-mode sonata forms, despite the strangeness of that which immediately precedes it. That is to say, it orthodoxly prolongs the unorthodox ‘dominant’ established in the exposition’s closing zone. As shown in the deep middleground reduction in Figure 2.4, the development begins by tonicising C \sharp major – a middleground German sixth –

⁴³ W. H. Reed, *Elgar as I Knew Him* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1936), p. 147

⁴⁴ As the cultural historian Samuel Hynes notes, it was almost impossible to describe the war in teleological terms. ‘The accounts [of soldiers in the trenches] are descriptive rather than narrative: like the war itself they do not move in any direction, or reach any objective—they are simply there’. See his *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1990), p. 116.

which ultimately resolves to V_A/E at 46:10 as part of the retransition to the recapitulation. (NB: The cluster of notes in parenthesis indicates that the bass $F\sharp$ belongs to a linear composing-out of E Lydian: while its local, ‘vertical’ function is to tonicise $V/\sharp VI$, it is part of the horizontal expression of a dominant macroharmony at a middleground level.)

Figure 2.4: middleground reduction, 43:1–47:1

At the level of the foreground, the development is also fairly normative: it emphasises quick harmonic movement between fifth-related key areas, which are only ever weakly tonicised by contrapuntal neighbour motions (as opposed to root-position cadences); and it cycles through thematic materials from the exposition in a similar order: i.e. P1, P2, CF, S/P1, retransition (standing on the dominant). As shown in Figure 2.5, the lack of a local root-position C major tonic between 44:2 and 44:6, as well as the persistent harmonic colloquy with E minor (see the $\hat{6}-\hat{5} / \hat{5}-\hat{6}$ suspensions), result in the harmonic destabilization of P1, which gives it a more developmental quality. It is repeated sequentially as part of a falling cycle of fifths, which charts a course through C, F, and $B\flat$ majors.

Figure 2.5: voice-leading reduction, 44:2–45:1

At 45:1, P2 reverses the direction of sequential travel, now composed of ascending fifth motions (see Example 2.1). An especially weak form of dominant arrival (i.e. $V^{6/4}/d$, beat 4 of 45:7) clears space for a medial-caesura effect (unusually retained from the exposition), which is filled in sonically by a single melodic voice at 45:8.

The image shows a musical score for rehearsal figures 45:1-8. It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 1-7) is labeled with 'basic idea' and 'b.i. repeated'. The second system (measures 8-11) is labeled with 'b.i. fragmented', 'Dominant arrival', and 'Caesura fill'. Below the music, there are two lines of harmonic analysis. The first line, 'Ascending fifths:', shows a sequence of chords: B^{\flat} , I, IV^{\flat}_3 , V^{\flat}_4 , no res., F^{\flat} , V^{\flat}_3 , I, IV^{\flat}_3 , V^{\flat}_4 , no res., C^{\flat} , V^{\flat}_3 . The second line shows a bass line progression: i, N, i, iv, V, i, iv, V^{\flat}_4 .

Example 2.1: rehearsal figures 45:1-8

At 46:1 the first bar of S and a twice-iterated half-bar fragment from P1 (0:9) are amalgamated to form a new two-bar basic idea (see Example 2.2). While the third progression in the bass (i.e. $B-C\#-D\#$) provides contrapuntal resolution to V_A/E through a $V^{4/3}/IV-V^{4/3}/V-V^{6/3}$ auxiliary half cadence, the obsessively repetitive melodic material intoned above it is developed sequentially and thus implies continuing rather than concluding function. The fermatas, which separate out the individual elements of the cadence, make each harmony sound detached and atomised; one is not given the sense that they belong to the same syntactic whole. After the bass of the $V^{6/3}$ chord is sounded at 46:6, however, a sense of forward momentum is reintroduced after a slip via a chromatic $4/3$ to a German sixth at 46:8, with continuous quavers being

reinstated in both parts. Arrival on the dominant at 46:10 is then prolonged for five bars as part of an emphatic dominant lock. Tonic arrival is secured at 47:1.

46

basic idea (S & P1.3) b.i. repeated fragmentation (P1.3) x 5

S P1.3

E: vi/IV v³/IV v³/V V³

standing on the dominant x 5

V³ V³/VI v^3 VI v^3 V³

47 Recap.

V³ v^3 V I

Example 2.2: rehearsal figures 46:1–47:1

§2.2.3 Recapitulation and Coda

The recapitulation (see Figure 2.6) provides resolution to the tonic, which is prolonged until the movement's end without being juxtaposed with another polar harmony. While S (49:2) is not recapitulated explicitly *in* E major, the root of the minor subdominant (i.e. A minor) can be parsed as $\hat{4}$ in a $\hat{4}\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{4}\hat{3}$ neighbour-note figure above the tonic root; the G \sharp at 48:1, I argue, can be read as part of a modally mixed horizontalization of the tonic chord.

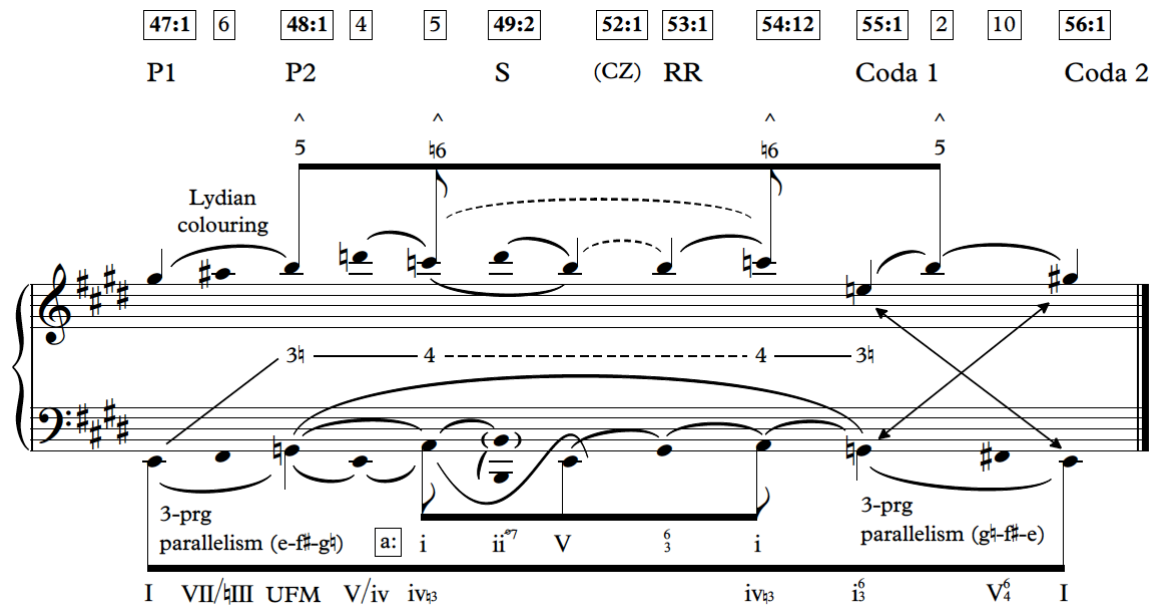


Figure 2.6: middleground graph, 47:1–56:1

A minor might thus be interpreted not as a real key area, but as a melodic embellishment of the tonic. That Elgar’s recollection of the Romance’s inner B section at 53:1 (see Chapter 1, Case Study 1.3 for an analysis of this movement) is presented as part of this illusory modulation, and that it opens up a liminal thematic space between the recapitulation of the secondary theme and the coda(s), supports Matthew Riley’s interpretation of it as an ‘episode’.⁴⁵ According to his theory, the structural import of most Elgarian episodes can be defined as follows: 1) they are most commonly introduced at thresholds in conventional formal design (as in the gap between exposition and development, and between recapitulation and coda); 2) they are not reducible to the normative elements of a sonata plan (i.e. primary theme, secondary theme, transition, etc.); and 3) they have few ramifications for the architectonics of the movements in which they appear: even when they might be considered ‘uncanny’, their interpolation does not create a formal ‘problem’ for the work, and the authority of the conventional frame is ultimately preserved. In short, they are structurally benign.⁴⁶

The great irony inherent in this theme’s ‘episodic’ nature is that its ‘harmonically directed and tuneful music is positioned in the midst of a movement

⁴⁵ Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 33.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

that contains a significant amount of fractured melodic material and harmonic indirection, setting both elements clearly in relief.⁴⁷ Despite such apparent local stability, however, the theme's overall tonal function at a middleground level is that of an unstable neighbour-note dissonance. Riley's definition of an Elgarian episode can thus be supplemented (in this instance) with an additional definitional category, which I call voice-leading irony: i.e. the practice of treating harmonies as if they meant one thing at a foreground level (i.e. consonance) and another at the level of the middleground (i.e. dissonance).⁴⁸

Neither of the two codas (rehearsal figures 55 and 56) confirms the tonic with a strong sounding root-position perfect cadence: after the novelty of the Lydian macroharmony in the exposition's closing zone, such traditional means of achieving closure would appear clichéd. However, while the horizontal composing out of a Lydian macroharmony might have provided an effective means of instantiating structural dissonance, it cannot be used to produce closure: something that is synonymous with vertical chord-to-chord succession, typified by the conventional V–I cadence. (NB: While the Lydian mode could be sounded as a cluster which resolved to the tonic, a simultaneity such as this would be incongruent with the movement's exclusively triadic surface, and its distinctive $\sharp\hat{4}$ – $\hat{5}$ motion would be lost in the resultant density of sonic information.) As such, Elgar is forced to look to another two-chord harmonic succession as a means of closing the movement. Two criteria are essential to his choice of dominant substitute: 1) it must still express something of a dominant character, for which the intervals of a natural seventh and a major third are central; and 2) it must be derived from the *sui generis* network of harmonic connections explored in the finale, so that closure does not appear to be achieved as a result of a generic imposition from without.

Equally important to the success of this dominant substitute, however, is that the tonic which follows it should be prepared in such a way that its tonicity is beyond question. Given that the resolution to it will not be heard to be as strong as that inherent in the conventional V–I cadence, it is imperative that the prevailing harmonic context of the codas should suggest no tonal ambiguity.

⁴⁷ Andrew Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style', p. 79.

⁴⁸ This concept is borrowed from Kevin Korsyn, 'Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 10, No. 1/2, 1991: 3–72, at 34.

In the first coda, Elgar prolongs $\hat{5}$ through coupling while the bass descends linearly from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$. In the second, the bass traverses the entire length of the tonic scale in a linear descent from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{1}$ (see Figures 2.7 and 2.8, respectively). Both upper and lower voices seem wholly preoccupied with the scale degrees of the tonic triad.

Figure 2.7: voice-leading reduction, 54:12–55:10

Figure 2.8: voice-leading reduction, 56:1–11

The second coda even features a quasi $\hat{3}$ -line descent (56:1 to 7, Figure 2.8), but $\hat{1}$ is supported by a $6/3$ chord (56:7), the bass of which is part of an arpeggiation of a dominant-seventh on A (56:9). While this latter harmony might be described as a German sixth in C# minor, the strong root motion that ensues from A to E (56:9–10) implies a plagal cadence, the subdominant quality of which alludes to the minor-mode

illusory key area of the recapitulation's secondary theme, but also the tonics of the first and second movements of the Violin Sonata. However, its major third and natural seventh allow this subdominant chord to maintain something of a 'dominant' quality, too. It therefore fulfills the criteria necessary for a successful dominant-substitute chord, after the *V Stufe* has been replaced as a structural default by the earlier Lydian macroharmony.

To summarise, this movement begins in the tonic and leads us to expect a tonicisation of the dominant in the closing zone at the end of the exposition; this is motivated by the prolongation of *V/V* as part of *S*. Elgar presents us instead with a chromatic, sequential passage. The following development section, however, prolongs a German 6th-*V*-*I* progression at a middleground level. Typically, this would be used to convert the tonicised *V* of the exposition into an active dominant of the tonic, so as to facilitate a structural resolution at the beginning of the recapitulation. In other words, the behaviour of the music both before and after it treats the closing zone as if it were intended to establish a dominant *Stufe*. Close reading demonstrates that the closing zone is scaffolded by a descending E Lydian scale. Crucially, the Lydian mode is macroharmonically equivalent with the dominant key, which it effectively replaces. Considered abstractly, then, this passage does count as an admittedly oblique reference to *V*. However, it does not suggest the Lydian mode aurally; the closing zone's surface is dominated by the chromatic, sequential repetition of a one-bar motif. I have chosen to interpret this surface dissonance as emphasising the structural dissonance which the dominant itself was originally thought to create, but which over-repetition had made difficult to register. (How could a harmony so closely linked to the tonic be 'dissonant', in the 1918 sense of the word?) While much of the finale's sonata form is relatively conventional, then, its approach to the articulation of the structural dominant is utterly unique; it translates it into a more twentieth-century language, so that it might be experienced afresh, thus demonstrating the continued fertility of sonata form in the early twentieth century.

§2.2.4 Hermeneutics

In closing, I would like to consider Elgar's unorthodox treatment of sonata form in the finale of the Violin Sonata in terms of a possible Wagnerian intertext. Brian Trowell

has suggested that the recurring melodic idea which binds the structurally dissonant passage from 43:1 to 13 together hints at the ‘Bliss’ motif⁴⁹ from Wagner’s *Die Walküre*, Act 1, Scene 3 (see Examples 2.3 and 2.4).⁵⁰

Sieglinde

O lass in Nä - he zu dir mich nei - gen

Example 2.3, Wagner, *Die Walküre*, WW86B, Act 1, Scene 3, Schirmer 61:4

Example 2.4, rehearsal figure 43:1

This melodic allusion encourages us to compare the role of Elgar’s Lydian/dominant macroharmony in the tonal narrative of the finale with the relevant dramatic moment from Wagner’s opera, in which the ‘Bliss’ motif marks a state of newfound intensity in Sieglinde’s and Siegmund’s relationship. Sieglinde uses the motif as a means of intoning the following words:

O let me bend
 more closely towards you,
 that I see more clearly
 the noble light

⁴⁹ For more on this Leitmotivic classification, see: J. K. Holman’s *Wagner’s Ring: A Listener’s Companion & Concordance* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), p. 134.

⁵⁰ Brian Trowell, ‘The Road to Brinkwells: the late chamber music’ in Lewis Foreman (ed.) *The Music of Elgar – Vol 2: Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War* (Worcester: Elgar Enterprises 2014), 347–387, at p. 372.

that breaks forth
from your eye and face
and so sweetly suborns my senses!⁵¹

Despite the fact that Siegmund's noble features have induced Sieglinde to enter into a knowingly unlawful and incestuous relationship, this coupling ultimately represents a more authentic form of union than the state of sexual slavery which constitutes her marriage to Hunding. The twins' relationship thus embodies the abstract ideal of love, while contravening the principles of matrimony to which such an ideal is often materially reduced (i.e. in law).

One might understand the formal function of Elgar's Lydian macroharmony in similar terms. It flouts the dictates of the *Formenlehre* textbooks, which require the secondary theme to be confirmed by a cadence in a new harmonic area, but it also stands (ironically) as a more authentic means of instantiating one of its key concepts: namely, structural dissonance. In other words, Elgar breaks the rules in order better to exemplify the ideals those rules were intended to represent. In doing so, Elgar had 'display[ed] how capable the sonata form is of saying new things at the bidding of a composer who has something new to say'.⁵² Like Pound, Elgar had made it new.

Section 2.3: Without 'big words' or teleology: tonal pairing and sonata form (Violin Sonata, i)

As the cultural historian Samuel Hynes has described it, one of the most pressing tasks perceived by some war-time artists was 'to get rid of big words': capitalised abstractions such as Courage, Glory, and Bravery, which beautified and pretended to make whole once more the fragments of a culture shattered by conflict.⁵³ In the draft preface to a book of poems which he would not live to see published, Wilfred Owen stressed that

⁵¹ Richard Wagner, *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung: A Companion*, trans. & ed. Stewart Spencer (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 136.

⁵² Author's name unknown (London music critic for *The Scotsman*), 'Elgar Celebration Concert', *The Scotsman*, Monday 05 December 1932, p. 10.

⁵³ Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 167.

This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.

Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour,
might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.

Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.

My subject is War, and the pity of War.

The poetry is in the pity.⁵⁴

Ernest Hemingway, in a similarly famous and much-quoted passage, states in *A Farewell to Arms* that ‘abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates’.⁵⁵

If the experience of war was adequately to be represented in writing, descriptions of concrete particulars, not degraded abstractions, would be required. There was little consensus, however, about which literary forms would best showcase these.

Let us take developments in English poetry as an example. Peter Howarth observes that some poets, for reasons both practical and aesthetic, had thought that their gritty, this-worldly vocabulary could be accommodated well by pre-established forms, even if the resultant rhythmic balances and patterned rhyme schemes provided ‘aesthetic compensation for what should remain uncompensatable’.⁵⁶ Indeed, it should not be surprising that some poets might yearn to find the illusive shape of chaos in a familiar pattern. For Owen, composed forms provided a necessary

⁵⁴ Wilfred Owen, *Wilfred Owen: Selected Poems*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 64. In one of Owen’s most famous poems, he exemplifies this aesthetic philosophy by contrasting the Latin platitude ‘Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori [it is sweet and proper to die for one’s country]’, often trotted out to soldiers, with relentlessly particular and piteous descriptions of a soldier’s death in a gas attack (ibid. p. 28). A number of other poets pursued similar strategies. Robert Graves’s ‘Big Words’, for example, describes the thought process of a young soldier who tries stoically to face the imminent possibility of his own death. The poem’s last rhyming couplet, however, sweeps away his earlier high-rhetorical pretensions: ‘But on the firestep, waiting to attack, / He cursed, prayed, sweated, wished the proud words back’. Siegfried Sassoon’s ‘The Hero’ contrasts what is told to a mother of her son’s ‘heroic’ death with the truth: namely, that he was not brave in death, but rather frightened and alone.

⁵⁵ Quoted in David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (London: Simon & Schuster), p. 205.

⁵⁶ Peter Howarth, ‘Poetic Form and the First World War’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 51–65 at p. 52.

psychological crutch: ‘the chances and collisions involved in composing to a pattern became a means to *explore* experience otherwise unavailable to consciousness because it was too frightening’.⁵⁷ Considered in more directly aesthetic terms, the restrictions implied by common metres and rhyming schemes were isomorphic with the sense of ‘compulsion, frustration, unexpected comradeship and unwanted results’, which were the consequence of ‘most people’s experience of national mobilisation’.⁵⁸ Traditional poetic structures coincided snugly with the neurotic ‘structure of feeling’ immanent to life as a soldier.⁵⁹

However, there were some for whom chaos could not be tamed. A new language would be necessary, which did away with pre-ordained shapes, if the unprecedented suffering and desolation of the Great War were truthfully to be rendered. It was not only poets forced, or enlisting, into active service who created this language, but ordinary soldiers writing in letters home to loved ones and in private diaries. As Samuel Hynes notes, many of these documents

are composed mainly of *things* — shells, pieces of equipment, mounds of torn earth, disfigured and fragmented human bodies — all rather small-scale, all randomly disposed, and all rendered without judgment or expressed emotion, as though boots, helmet and human face, heaped earth and bodies, telephones and decapitated heads and tinned horsemeat were all morally equal parts of one chaos. There is no attempt at a Big Picture, no inferred order in terms of which those fragmented particulars might have meaning. *The accounts are descriptive rather than narrative: like the war itself they do not move in any direction, or reach any objective—they are simply there.*⁶⁰

Rhetorical constructions such as those described by Hynes here do not lend themselves to sustained argument or teleological development and, as such, they seem to dispense with the very idea of narrative itself. While this resulted in a style of writing that was new, innovation was not necessarily at the forefront of the minds of

⁵⁷ Ibid., italics in the original, p. 55.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 56.

⁵⁹ This evocative concept is borrowed from Raymond Williams’s, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128–136.

⁶⁰ Hynes, *A War Imagined*, my italics, p. 115.

its practitioners. Most soldiers were trying merely to fix in words that which was beyond conventional forms of understanding, so that they might better understand or cope with it. The new aesthetic possibilities that this created, however, instinctively appealed to modernist writers back home. As Peter Howarth puts it,

a great many modernist innovations in poetic form can be seen as a perfect analogue for war experience. The blasts and sudden collisions in rhythm and imagery; the syntax which moves away from individual agency, or personal identity; the freezing of time and rational causation into the timeless apocalypse or the eternal haunting of the unburied dead; the inability to see ahead, living instead moment by moment, detail by detail; all these are essential structural features of *The Wasteland*, and of the First World War wastelands it draws on, psychic and geographical.⁶¹

Whether one is talking about poets of a Georgian or a modernist sensibility, however, clear changes in poetic approach are in both cases evident. In the case of the former, high-rhetorical abstraction has been replaced by an emphasis on everyday speech, and the use of conventional forms has ceased to be second nature but is rather used subversively: the ear is allowed to savour those rhythmic and syntactic awkwardnesses that occur when form and content do not coincide. In the case of the latter, there is a similar emphasis on abrasive, concrete language that mocks ‘big words’,⁶² while form is generated from the collisions between atomised and disconnected moments.

⁶¹ Howarth, ‘Poetic Form and the First World War’, pp. 58–59. The link between modernist aesthetics and the experience of war has been explored extensively in recent times. See, for example: Hynes, *A War Imagined*; Allyson Booth, *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space between Modernism and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); and Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁶² Take this passage from Ezra Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, for example:

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization. [...]

For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.

It was against the backdrop of such aesthetic changes, either in the process of being consolidated or in a nascent stage of development, that Elgar was to send his Violin Sonata, Op. 82, off to the publishers in October 1918, a month before the armistice. Considered in terms of its musical materials alone, its opening sonata-allegro is both tonally and formally conservative; Elgar seems not to perceive the need for any change in musical language. Evaluated solely in terms of its apparently heroic rhetoric, it might be thought to betray an insensitivity to the unheroic realities of a war which Elgar had himself been too old to fight in. In a sample of the Sonata's initial reception, for example, Daniel Grimley observes that '*The Globe* [...] praised Elgar's "vigorous, healthy music"', and in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* before the actual premiere, W. H. Reed wrote of the first movement's "strong masculine theme, full of dignity and breathing of open-air life".⁶³ Grimley is himself broadly sympathetic to such interpretations, and suggests that the movement can indeed 'be heard as an attempt to portray an idealised masculine subjectivity, a male heroic musical subject that had appeared earlier in Elgar's symphonic work'.⁶⁴ Even in a medium which conveys no semantic content, Elgar has failed to eliminate problematic 'big words'. Grimley stresses, however, that such an effect is only properly to be understood if it is also recognised that Elgar's musical machismo is operational at a rhetorical-thematic level only. Describing the Brinkwells music more generally, Grimley observes that

what makes the chamber music unusual is that [its] heroic musical subject often seems heavily compromised or absent: in spite of their busy surface activity, the works do not articulate the kind of heroic gestures common in Elgar's earlier works. Rather they are marked, as Trowell notes, by 'a tendency towards harmonic stasis within a section, towards statement and repetition rather than development'. Similarly, crucial structural landmarks often seem strained or effortful rather than expansive or grandiloquent, as though the music were trying to break out of its boundaries rather than comfortably filling them.⁶⁵

⁶³ Daniel M. Grimley, 'A smiling with a sigh', p. 130.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

In other words, the movement's strident rhetoric can be shown to be at odds with its uncertain tonal syntax.⁶⁶ Michael Kennedy has written on the movement in similar terms: 'there is a typical restlessness about [it], for all its outward impression of placidity, and it is [the] unexpected deployment of tonality which imparts it'.⁶⁷ Percy Young similarly observes that the expressive power of the Violin Sonata is immanent in the tension between rhetoric and harmony: that is, between 'the heroic properties of the violin part [...] and [...] the oblique harmonies which set so much of the music in interrogatory mood'.⁶⁸

The result of such parametric non-congruence is that the implied heroism suggested by the theme's surface rhetoric is shown to be empty;⁶⁹ it floats free of a deeper harmonic structure that could provide it with unambiguous tonal meaning. Grimley suggests that 'such characteristics are not unique to Elgar's chamber works: indeed, they are common to modernist musical practice'.⁷⁰ The underlying argument of this section, however, is that the mismatch between rhetoric and syntax, inherent in the Violin Sonata's Allegro, is not simply indicative of a coyly modernist aesthetic. Rather, it is also inspired by the ways in which Schumann and Brahms brought sonata form into dialogue with principles of tonal pairing.⁷¹

According to Peter H. Smith, tonal pairing involves an intermingling of keys 'to such an extent that it is difficult to determine the boundaries [between them] or indeed even which of the two keys functions as [a work's] governing tonic'.⁷² He describes the resultant relationships as a kind of 'colloquy': a fluid tonal dialogue in which the argument passes back and forth between the representative harmonies of

⁶⁶ This phrase is adapted from Terry Eagleton's *How to Read a Poem* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2007), p. 3.

⁶⁷ Michael Kennedy, liner note to *Elgar • Vaughan Williams • Walton: Violin Sonatas*, Yehudi and Hepzibah Menuhin, CD, EMI Classics 5 66122 2, ©1996, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Percy Young, *Elgar O.M.: A Study of a Musician* (London: Collins, 1955), p. 349.

⁶⁹ I have borrowed this term from Anne Hyland's article 'Rhetorical Closure in the First Movement of Schubert's Quartet in C major, D. 46: A Dialogue with Deformation', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2009): 111–142. She uses it to encapsulate the effect created when tonal and thematic arrivals do not coincide at crucial landmarks in the form (i.e. when primary theme materials are recapitulated, but clarification of the global tonic is deferred until slightly later).

⁷⁰ Grimley, 'The chamber music and works for strings', p. 130.

⁷¹ See Smith, 'The Drama of Tonal Pairing', 'Tonal Pairing and Monotonicity', and 'Associative Harmony, Tonal Pairing, and Middleground Structure'. Elgar owned a considerable number of chamber-music scores by both Schumann and Brahms, including the E_♭ Piano Quintet of the former and the B minor Piano Quintet of the latter (see Dennison, 'Elgar's Musical Apprenticeship', pp. 20–27), both of which Smith cites as exemplars of tonal pairing.

⁷² Smith, 'Associative Harmony, Tonal Pairing, and Middleground Structure', p. 236.

the keys in question, without protracted speeches or rants.⁷³ Sonata form, by contrast, is traditionally understood to be motivated by the concept of structural dissonance or harmonic polarity, which is established by the contrast immanent between a stable and cadentially realised tonic and a tonicised yet clearly subordinate harmonic area, usually the dominant. When these two approaches are combined, the result is that ‘the kaleidoscopic wavering between keys’ inherent to tonal pairing destabilises the ‘clear directed opposition between two tonalities’ that is necessary to the definition of a sonata form.⁷⁴ The cognitive dissonance engendered by pairing in a monotonal sonata-form context (i.e. ‘What key are we in?!’) becomes the alternative to the structural dissonance generated by polarised *Stufen*.

However, it is this sense of harmonic polarization, which Elgar attenuates, that is responsible for generating the teleological narrative drive that is seen to lie at the heart of sonata form. In the words of Hepokoski and Darcy, most sonata forms ‘set up a quest narrative’, insofar as they can be seen to ‘drive [...] through a vectored sequence of energised events toward a clearly determined, graspable goal, the ESC [i.e. essential structural cadence]’.⁷⁵ The stock of such hermeneutic currency rises greatly in minor-mode sonatas, as these ‘contend with the initial presence of the tonic minor—often a turbulent or threatening expressive field—either to overcome it [through a transfiguration into the tonic major] or be overcome by it’.⁷⁶ Given the ‘artificial’ quality that is often attributed to the minor mode, on account of its perversion of the major-tonic triad given in the first five fundamentals of the ‘Chord of Nature’, ‘minor-mode sonatas [...], as part of their generic burden, seek an emancipation into a more natural condition [i.e. a transfiguration into the tonic major], even though that quest might fail within any individual sonata narrative’.⁷⁷

In the context of Elgar’s opening Allegro movement, however, the generic teleological quest narrative implied by minor-mode sonata forms is almost totally undermined.⁷⁸ Its opening introduction is tonally mercurial, while P is

⁷³ Smith, ‘Tonal Pairing and Monotonicity’, p. 78.

⁷⁴ Smith, ‘Associative Harmony’, p. 237.

⁷⁵ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 252.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁷⁸ This might be described reductively as follows: Primary theme (i) → Secondary theme (EEC: III, VI, or some other closely related major-mode *Stufe*) → Development (series of modulatory keys, culminating in V_A/i) → Recapitulation (major-mode transfiguration of the tonic, I).

underdetermined;⁷⁹ the major quality generically associated with S is corrupted by an indeterminate colloquy between E minor, C major, and G major, and the essential expositional cadence (i.e. EEC) is in F# minor. The recapitulation of P is in the ‘wrong key’, thereby reactivating the tonal ambiguity which beset the opening introduction.⁸⁰

While Joel Lester suggests that Schumann’s approach to sonata form, ‘like the best twentieth-century neo-Classical works, [...] reinterprets an old form for new ends’, the same cannot be said for Elgar, writing sixty-two years after Schumann’s death.⁸¹ What was once *sui generis* had become yet another reified compositional strategy. However, as we have seen from the analysis of the Violin Sonata’s finale in Section 2.2, Elgar was not afraid radically to renovate sonata-form concepts if they did not meet his expressive purposes in 1918. This being the case, it seems fair to assume that his choice to write in a decidedly Schumannesque style was not made because he was running low on inspiration, or because he had become reactionary. Rather, one might hypothesise that Elgar viewed the intermixture of tonal pairing with sonata form as yielding expressive possibilities well suited to the expression of particular kinds of thought about the war and its impact on modern life.

While one of Elgar’s biographers opines that Elgar’s retreats to Brinkwells, a cottage in Fittleworth, West Sussex, where he composed all of his mature chamber music, ‘relieved him from wartime worlds, whether bellicose, patriotic, dutiful, mournful, or escapist’, it was still the case that ‘war echoes could [...] be heard across the channel’.⁸² As Alice Elgar wrote in her diary entry for 30 May 1918, ‘Bad war news this & succeeding days. Incessant gun fire (distant cannon)’.⁸³ Even the loveliest idyll was not incorruptible.

⁷⁹ Underdetermined P-themes have ‘clearly understood tonics’, on account of the macroharmonic build-up of the relevant diatonic collection, but they are ‘not secured with an authentic cadence’: see *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 73.

⁸⁰ As already discussed in the introduction, these terms would possibly be inappropriate in an analysis of Schumann’s music, as they imply a reified (often Beethovenian) formal template with which it is doubtful Schumann was perpetually in dialogue. In the music of Elgar and Brahms, however, sonata-form composition had been fully codified, and engagement with it often involved a dialogue with both historical sonata-form repertoire as well as abstract theoretical models, on the part of the composer.

⁸¹ Lester, ‘Robert Schumann and Sonata Forms’, 194.

⁸² Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), p. 131.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

More significantly, the composition of chamber music followed on from an intensive period of composition dedicated to the war effort, which had produced no fewer than six relatively large-scale works: namely, *Carillon* (1914), *Polonia* (1915), ‘Une voix dans le désert’ (1915), *Le drapeau belge* (1917), *The Fringes of the Fleet* (1917), and *The Spirit of England* (1915–1917). Even though ‘detractors [of this music], giving it little thought, find it disappointingly silent on the suffering of Europe, or of its new musical environment’,⁸⁴ Elgar had still been reflecting over the past three years on how to deal with the subject of war in music; it is unlikely his thoughts on the matter would not have influenced, in however small a way, the genesis of the only chamber work to be completed before the armistice.

Scholars of Elgar’s music tend to be coy, however, about the relationship between Elgar’s chamber music and the Great War (refer back to the Introduction). It is difficult to tell what such silence might mean. One supposes that if scholars had taken the music to reflect on its contexts in a significant or an effective way, then this would have been at the forefront of their critical evaluations. The quiet confidence of suggestions such as this one by the Elgar enthusiast, Michael Messenger, are relatively rare: ‘[the chamber works] contain passages of great lyricism, but equally all are imbued with touches either of the macabre or an innate pessimism, and it is difficult not to believe that they are coloured by the war and the effect it had had upon the composer’.⁸⁵ The following analysis might be taken as a demonstration that Messenger was right to interpret the chamber works (or at least this particular movement) in such terms. The ways in which Elgar undermines narrative teleology and rhetorical heroism in the opening movement of his sonata, which I detail in the remainder of this chapter, can be read profitably in terms of the work of a number of different writers, both civilians and combatants, who expressed scepticism about those very same concepts in their artistic reflections on the Great War.

⁸⁴ Harper-Scott, *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life*, p. 110.

⁸⁵ Michael Messenger, *Edward Elgar: An illustrated life of Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)*, (Risborough: Shire Publications Ltd., 2005), p. 47.

§2.3.1 Introduction

The presentation of the movement's opening basic idea (which I shall term P: A^{1.1})⁸⁶ is described by the violinist W. H. Reed as being 'of a rugged and forceful character' (see Example 2.5).⁸⁷ Marked *risoluto* [resolutely], the piano's bass thunders in descending, *forte* octaves, while the violin part pushes upwards. The melodic jump of an octave in the second bar aggressively spotlights what sounds (in prospect) like the culmination of the violin's opening arpeggiation of a tonic A minor, which was initially presented vertically as a triple-stopped chord. Taken all together, the loud dynamic, allegro tempo, full-sounding arpeggiated piano texture, and contrary motion between the voices, suggest the articulation of a secure opening harmony, expansive and strong.

Despite such declamatory rhetoric, however, the overall tonal syntax of this opening four-bar idea is ambiguous. While the upper voice arpeggiation intoned by the violin expresses A minor in the horizontal dimension, the supporting vertical harmony in bar 2, which undergirds its melodic completion, strongly implies a diminished seventh rooted on d \sharp as the opening's local harmonic goal. Which of these harmonies did Elgar intend us to hear more prominently: A minor or d \sharp ?⁸⁷ The bass A in bar 1 might be heard as an inner-voice chord tone in a linear composing out of a diminished seventh, which is completed by the fundamental bass d \sharp on the fourth beat of bar 2, but the violin's melody in the upper voice strongly suggests A minor, in which case d \sharp would be heard to function as some kind of temporary contrapuntal deflection from the 'correct' chord (i.e. a).

The contrapuntal resolution to E minor (the tonic of the work's title) in bar 3 has led a number of commentators to suggest that the opening two bars prolong d \sharp . Andrew Colton argues that 'the absence of any g \sharp destabilises [the opening A minor chord's] tonal focus'; 'by the second measure, the appearance of a d-sharp in the bass

⁸⁶ I here follow Hepokoski's and Darcy's principle that formal sections (i.e. P, TR, S, C, etc.) which are multi-modular in composition (i.e. they are made up of a number of thematic ideas) can be indicated by superscript numbers placed after the relevant letter (i.e. P¹). However, as they themselves clarify, 'in none of the zones do we notch a superscript integer upward from 1 to 2, from 2 to 3, and so on, unless a perfect cadence has been sounded in a key appropriate to that musical space'. If there are multiple thematic ideas, all of which remain unsupported by a cadence, then the number is appended with a series of decimals: i.e. P^{1.1}, ^{1.2}, ^{1.3}, etc. See *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 71. The letter A refers to the opening part of a small ternary form: i.e. A–B–A'.

⁸⁷ W. H. Reed, 'Elgar' in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Vol. 1 (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 372–377, at p. 373.

pulls us toward the official tonic key'.⁸⁸ W. H. Reed similarly comments that 'the first bar is apparently in A minor, but in the succeeding bars come the D sharp which establishes the key of E minor'.⁸⁹ However, it is crucial to note that both E minor's clipped, quaver articulation and the $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{6}$ suspension that follows it, seem immediately to undermine its local importance. Indeed, the resultant C6/3 chord in bar 3 of the piano part is sustained for three times as long as its harmonic predecessor. If this inverted sonority is judged to be a harmony in and of itself, which is temporarily shaded by a lower-neighbour-note B, then the A-G neighbour-note figure intoned by the violin in the upper voice can be heard to effect a relative transformation, which connects the A minor of the first bar with the C major of the third (see my annotations in Example 2.5).

Given these different interpretative possibilities, how is one to parse the harmonic progression traversed by this basic idea? Does it articulate a dominant-functioning contrapuntal resolution to E minor (i.e. $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}$ -i) on account of the leading-tone progression D#-E in the bass of the piano part, or is a relative transformation in A minor (i.e. i-III) effected by the $\hat{6}$ - $\hat{5}$ motion in the violin part?

Presentation phrase
 0:1
 Basic idea

Repeated basic idea (varied)

Arp. C: 6 5 Arp.

composed-out tritone

composed-out tritone

a:	i	III ⁶	#vii ⁷ /ii
e:	'iv'	#vii ⁷	i ⁵ -6 #vii ⁷ /v

Example 2.5: Elgar, Violin Sonata, Op. 82, 1st movement, 0:1-4

⁸⁸ Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style', p. 62.

⁸⁹ Reed, 'Elgar', p. 373.

Despite their idiosyncrasies, it is helpful to think of these opening four bars in terms of the presentation phrase of a classical sentence. While the ideas in bars 1 to 2 and 3 to 4 are elided with one another, the latter can still be perceived as a distorted repeat of the former: both express initial arpeggiations in the upper voice and the interval of a tritone in the bass. Similarly, while this phrase does not articulate a clear-cut tonic, it does ‘present’ the fundamental tonal problem that will occupy much of the rest of the sonata. To this extent, I believe that the retention of a classical formal label is heuristically useful.⁹⁰

Bars 5 to 8 might be heard as a contrasting continuation (P^{1.2}) in relation to the opening presentation phrase (see Example 2.6). As James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy put it, the contrasting sentence-continuation type does not display ‘the more commonly encountered fragmentation of material from the presentation, increase in the rate of harmonic activity, and so on’, but it provides a clear thematic change from the presentation (although the persistence of contrary motion between piano and violin parts ensures some continuity is maintained), and its model–sequence technique suggests clearly a medial formal function.⁹¹ As a thematic unit, it does little to resolve the tonal dilemma instantiated by the presentation. While it appears to prolong B minor as a scale step (*Stufe*), it is unclear which scale it fundamentally belongs to: it can be heard both as v of E minor, or ii of A minor. The local close to e6/3 in bar 6 might suggest to a listener the former interpretation, but it is important to note that the bass G is a passing tone in a linear motion from an inner voice, which culminates in the D in bar 8. Considered as a whole, then, the continuation prolongs the chord of B minor, with the appearance of the third above the fundamental root in the piano part being delayed by four bars. In this context, the local close to E minor might be thought to function as mere subdominant colouring (iv/b) in a larger process of composing out, rather than as an allusion to an overarching tonic.

⁹⁰ For Caplin’s definition of a sentence, see *Classical Form*, pp. 35–48.

⁹¹ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 84.

Continuation

0:5

UN

LN

b (ii/a or v/c): i iv^6_3 6-prg $vii^{\#4}_3$ i^6_3

Example 2.6: rehearsal figures 0:5–8

$P^{1.3}$, whose function is basically cadential, is characterised by a driving, trochaic rhythm (see Example 2.7). Taken together with the preceding B minor 6/3 chord, it appears to articulate a $i^{6/3}-iv^{6/3}-II^{6/5}-V^{4/2}$ progression and thus strongly implies contrapuntal resolution to a root-position b *Stufe* (although it is still unclear which scale it is operating in relation to). This cadential impulse is frustrated, however, and the two-bar basic-idea is merely repeated at a lower octave in bar 11; the violin and the piano shout more loudly after having failed to make their intentions clear to one another.

In order to break this cycle of repetition, Elgar pares back the texture to bare octaves between bars 13 and 14 in order to emphasise the composing-out of a descending arpeggiation of $F\#7$ in the bass. The strongly accented root of this *Stufe* does not discharge itself by fifth to B minor, however, but rather slips down by a tone to the E minor chord at 1:1 (i.e. iv/b). This plagal slippage is elided with the beginning of the primary theme proper. Weak harmonic deflection is contrasted with strong thematic re-beginning.

Cadential
0:9

b (ii/a or v/e): iv³ V³/V V² I etc.

P1.3 P1.1 1:1

F# (V/b): 4 — b6 — 5 — 3

V³ E C# A# F# V⁷ iv

Example 2.7: rehearsal figures 0:9–1:1

While few commentators doubt the oblique quality of the global tonic's presentation at 1:1, it is still possible to account for it as the logical product of a middleground progression. Indeed, one might regard it as a parallelism of the 'stern auxiliary cadence'⁹² at 0:1 to 3, reproduced at a deeper structural level (see Figure 2.9): the bass B in the left hand of the piano in bar 5 might be heard as the root of V/e, to which the opening A minor chord relates as a pre-dominant lower neighbour, and the beginning and end of P^{1.3} can be interpreted as a voice exchange within the tonic triad; the bass F# at bar 14 serves merely as a passing note, thus revealing an underlying IV–V–i progression.

⁹² Grimley, 'The chamber music and works for strings', p. 131.

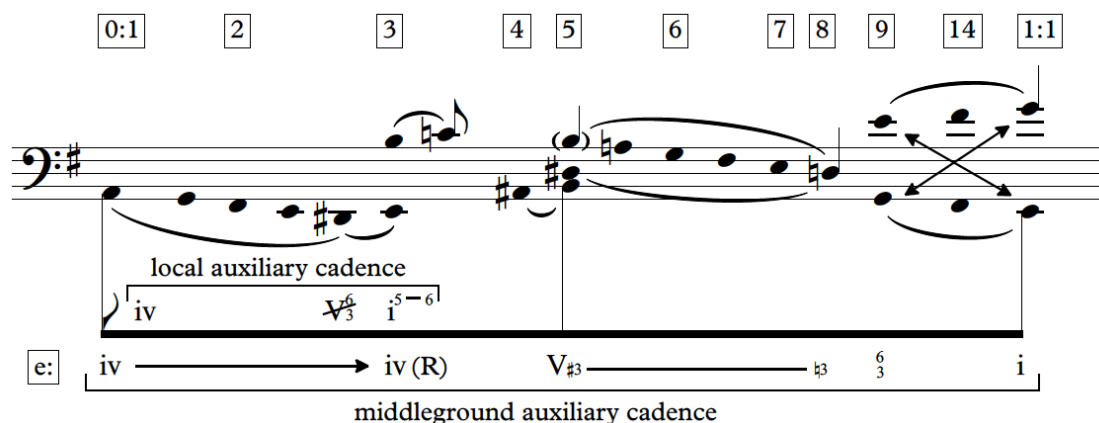


Figure 2.9: middleground graph, 0:1–1:1

Crucially, neither a foreground nor a middleground reading of this passage is totally satisfactory; as in the opening presentation phrase, A minor and E minor are paired, and it is difficult to make out which is principal and which is subordinate. The surface harmonic reading, which interprets the E minor chord at 1:1 as *iv/b*, struggles to account for the strong thematic re-beginning. The middleground interpretation, by contrast, which is orientated by the assumed presence of a middleground auxiliary cadence in E minor, requires us to ignore the cadential import of bars 9 to 14 and to hear the bass F# at 0:14 as a mere passing note without harmonic content (although Elgar’s reduction of the texture to bare octaves here helps to support this latter interpretation).

In light of its tonally mercurial quality, Elgar repeats this sentence once more between 1:1 and 3:1 in an attempt to clarify the movement’s overall tonic focus. Even though it is based on almost exactly the same thematic material, this repetition is best interpreted as the beginning of the primary theme proper (i.e. the A section of a small ternary theme), with 0:1 to 1:1 representing a kind of introduction. As is characteristic of introductions, this sentence lays out the fundamental ‘problem’ – namely, the over-determined quality of its fore- and middlegrounds, which can be seen respectively to articulate progressions in different keys – that will challenge the monotonal dynamic of conventional sonata narrative later in the form. To borrow Hepokoski’s and Darcy’s expression, this introduction can be likened to a conceptual “inkwell” into which the composer’s pen dips in the writing of the subsequent piece’.⁹³

⁹³ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 303.

§2.3.2 Exposition

Robert Anderson observes that the repetition of the opening sentence between 1:1 and 3:1 is now ‘firmly in E minor’, having begun ‘athwart [this nominal] key’.⁹⁴ As demonstrated in Figure 2.10, its middleground scaffolding broadly supports Anderson’s reading, with both upper and lower voices synchronizing with one another: the tonic is prolonged by a i–iv–i progression – the plagal cadence between 2:7 and 3:1 is straightforward – and the *Kopfton* (i.e. $\hat{3}/e$) is prolonged by neighbour-note motion.

At a more local level, though, things are more ambiguous. The function of the initial E minor chord at 1:1, for example, is overdetermined. It starts out as a local tonic, but as the bass descends a fourth to B at 1:2, its mode is altered to major and it is appended with a natural seventh, which implies resolution back to A minor. Such implications become explicit when this chord discharges strongly to C major (III/a) as a result of the ascending C: $\hat{7}$ – $\hat{8}$ motion in the bass. This major harmony is clearly heard as an apparent consonance, which temporarily dissimulates the A minor goal of the bass’s third progression (i.e. 1:3 to 14, C–B–A). A string of $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{6}$ suspensions, required to prevent parallel fifths, weakens the eventual arrival on A minor, however, as the music’s sequential quality undermines the articulation of its minor dominant at 1:9: V’s root is heard as part of a descending linear motion in an inner voice, and therefore struggles to sound properly cadential. In consequence, one might say that the foreground is primarily suggestive of A minor, but that E minor is far stronger at a middleground level, on account of the strongly accented plagal motion in the bass at 2:7 to 3:1. The tonal colloquy from the introduction persists, albeit in a milder form, as iv’s eventual resolution to i is clear-cut.

⁹⁴ Anderson, *Elgar*, p. 381; 380. He equates this with Schumannesque practice.

Figure 2.10: voice-leading reduction, 1:1–3:1

The introduction of a new four-bar basic idea at 3:1, which signifies the beginning of $B^{1.1}$ (i.e. the contrasting middle of P's small-ternary form), is elided with the resolution to E minor that marks the end of A (see Example 2.8).⁹⁵ The nominal tonic's instantiation in the opening bars of this new section results from what I describe as a 'paired' cadence: i.e. the contrapuntal prolongation of the tonic by a lower neighbour-note, which is harmonised by the dominant of the relative key, thus stressing the functional interchangeability of V chords belonging to the same scale. For example, E minor is prolonged by an e–d–e motion in the bass, with the lower-neighbour note d at 3:3 being the root of a dominant ninth in G major (itself being prepared by a predominant ii^7/G chord at 3:2). However, the resolution back to E minor at 3:4 is elided with the beginning of a four-bar continuation (i.e. $B^{1.2}$), based on contrasting material. It articulates a two-bar model that is then sequenced.

⁹⁵ William Caplin notes that 'an examination of the classical repertory reveals that the contrasting middle never elides with the exposition': see *Classical Form*, p. 75. It is unsurprising that Elgar, who was steeped in both romantic and classical traditions, might have opted for a model that emphasised continuous, 'organic' motion rather than strictly demarcated sections of action and repose. Despite B's elision with A, however, an essential quality of contrast is still clearly expressed by the change in texture (i.e. homophonic and full sounding after bare octaves), as well as its more loose-knit form-functional organization. To shirk such a formal label on account of its historically anomalous nature would be to miss the point: what matters is that music theory can describe music to a listener compellingly and accurately; absolute theoretical consistency is for me a secondary concern.

Example 2.8: rehearsal figures 3:1–4

The formal function of this B module has been variously interpreted by scholars. In Diana McVeagh's words, 'what at first sounds like an expressive second subject turns out to be a transition theme'.⁹⁶ While the circular (and potentially infinitely repeatable) progression, descending *Kopfton* coupling, and the *expressivo* marking of B^{1.1} suggest a form of stasis that is particularly idiomatic for secondary theme material, there has been no medial caesura to suggest the onset of a secondary thematic area. Furthermore, the music is still clearly in the tonic.

W. H. Reed's interpretation seems more plausible: he reads this passage as a variation on P material, although he similarly suggests that the module as a whole ends up being essentially transitional in character: 'At (3) there is a kind of inversion of the opening, but now broadly laid out and legato; this serves as a bridge passage'.⁹⁷ As I will attempt to demonstrate, this description is broadly correct but imprecise.

The broader middleground shape of P's B section is shown below in Figure 2.11. Given both the passing resemblance of B^{1.1} to A^{1.1} (on account of its opening, inverted third progression) and the form-functionally redundant repetitions of both its basic idea and its contrasting continuation in alternation with one another, it seems appropriate to describe this section as a contrasting middle.⁹⁸ Indeed, the move to B

⁹⁶ Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), p. 175.

⁹⁷ Reed, 'Elgar', p. 373.

⁹⁸ The word 'redundant' is not meant pejoratively, but technically. As William Caplin argues, anything that is 'not essential for establishing [a] function' is redundant: that is to say, when a pattern is repeated without adding anything new, we know already the function in question that the music expresses, but the composer chooses to repeat it for rhetorical (rather than form-functional) reasons. Such extensions

minor for the repetition of B^{1.1} at 3:9 destabilises the tonic through the establishment of a dominant *Stufe*, as is typical of contrasting middles,⁹⁹ albeit that B minor sounds like vi/D (in prospect) rather than v/e. Contrasting middle gives way to dissolving transition (i.e. A', represented melodically by P^{1.1}) at 4:1.¹⁰⁰ While this final part of P's small-ternary design appears to tonicise v, the crucial fifth descent, v-i, at 4:5 to 7, sounds sequential rather than cadential.

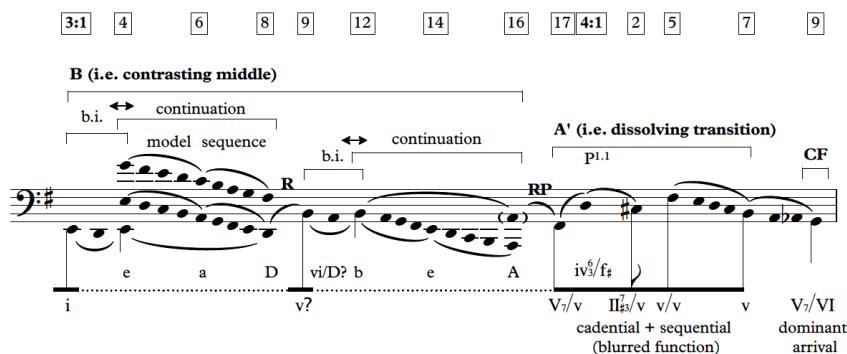


Figure 2.11: bass-line reduction, 3:1–4:9

As if to confirm its wholly contrapuntal and hierarchically subordinate nature, the bass of this final B minor chord falls a third to V7/VI at 4:7 to 9 (Figure 2.11). While this dominant arrival is not achieved cadentially, it still has something of the function of a half cadence (see Example 2.9). As Caplin points out, in the context of the styles of Mozart, Beethoven, and Haydn, ‘unlike a main theme or a subordinate theme, a transition need not necessarily end with a cadence. [...] In [some] cases, a cadential progression is absent, yet the final dominant still gives the impression of being an ending harmony’.¹⁰¹ Maintained for four bars, this chord might be thought to express

often produce more asymmetrical or *sui generis* themes, which diverge from Caplin’s models of tightly-knit formal units: i.e. the period, the sentence, the small ternary, etc. In the case of a contrasting middle, however, ‘these loosening techniques are entirely appropriate to [its] fundamental functions’: namely, to contrast with the relatively tight-knit sentence that precedes it. See Caplin, *Classical Form*, p. 19.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁰⁰ Hepokoksi and Darcy refer to this type of theme as a ‘larger, rounded structure (ABA’), with a dissolving reprise [...] suggesting a large-scale “occupation” of P-space’: *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 108.

¹⁰¹ Caplin, *Classical Form*, p. 133. He provides the following reasons in defence of this: ‘the dominant can appear to be an ending harmony [even without cadential articulation] because (among many other possibilities) it may mark what sounds like the beginning of a standing on the dominant, it may feature a liquidation and a reduction in texture, or it may be especially elongated relative to its preceding harmonies’ (p. 135). All these criteria hold true for the passage in question.

two different, elided functions: namely, a standing on the dominant and a medial-caesura fill. In terms of Hepokoski's and Darcy's Sonata Theory, the latter formal module 'represents the sonic articulation of the gap separating [P and S]', which divides the sonata's exposition into two parts. A caesura-fill's principal characteristic is the creation of a feeling of 'energy-loss'.¹⁰² Crucially, the attenuated texture, which prepares the arrival of S at 5:1, is suggestive of the traversal of a threshold: it feels as if the tumult of P has been shed, revealing the onset of a new calm.

Example 2.9: rehearsal figures 4:9–5:1

The S theme, which begins at 5:1, is a classic example of the romanticisation of the secondary theme concept (see Example 2.10). As Hepokoski and Darcy note, classical secondary themes were often characterised by 'agile changes of character' rather than 'eroticized or idealized' *dolce* topics.¹⁰³ Post-1840, however, they argue that maximally distinct P and S themes became more common, with the overture to Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* providing a *locus classicus*.¹⁰⁴ Elgar's secondary theme appears to have been forged in the same mould: its melodic organization is obsessively repetitive, and its *piano* hush, sustained bass pedal, and arpeggiated violin texture give it an almost ethereal quality, as if glimpsed through a haze or from a great distance.

While the harmonic arrival on VI6/3 at 5:1 sounds relatively strong, pairing soon clouds the tonal picture and prevents any kind of harmonic polarity from being established. Central to this effect is the pervasiveness of melodic $\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ suspensions (see

¹⁰² Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 40.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 132; 147.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

Example 2.10), which enable C major to melt into E minor through semitonal voice leading.

Example 2.10: rehearsal figures 5:1–4

At a more harmonic level, resolutions to either triad through diminished seventh chords are immediately juxtaposed with one another at 5:13 and 6:1 (see Example 2.11). Because of the lack of any broader middleground gesture, it is difficult to know which of these resolutions is intended to be more important.

Example 2.11: rehearsal figures 5:11–6:1

Further complicating matters is the ubiquitous presence of pedal bass Gs in both the violin and piano parts, which function as oblique references to the prescribed modulation to the relative mediant in the *Formenlehre* textbooks (i.e. the key to which the movement would, generically speaking, be most likely to go). The instability of the

resultant inversions of both C major and E minor chords, as 6/4s and 6/3s, respectively, is a by-product of this generic haunting. To adapt a passage from Caplin, ‘listener[s] can experience the sense of two different prolongations, each on a different hierarchical level of the work—a tonic prolongation at the lower (foreground) level and a [relative mediant] prolongation at the higher [background] level’.¹⁰⁵

As shown in Figure 2.12, the suggestion of E minor’s relative major as a harmonic goal becomes more concrete in the passage from 6:10 to 7:1, in which a linear span from D³ to D² is composed out in the bass. It is harmonised by chords associated with subdominant function at both its beginning and penultimate stages (i.e. E minor and C major), and with a V6/4 at its end. Rather than resolving to the major tonic, however, it slips upwards in an interrupted motion to vi at 7:2, showcasing yet again the functional interchangeability of E minor and G major as tonal goals. An under-third is added to E minor, however, giving it the aural quality of a half-diminished-seventh chord rooted on C#. By a *Tristan*-esque legerdemain of voice leading, this chord is transformed into C#7: two voices remain static, articulating the interval of a second between b and c#, while the remaining two voices move via ascending semitone motion in parallel minor thirds from e–g to e#–g#. ¹⁰⁶ In terms of function, this dominant seventh discharges itself normatively as a means of tonicising F# minor at 8:1, the arrival of which is elided with the return of P-based material for the closing zone (see Figure 2.12). This moment is best interpreted as a failed essential expositional cadence (EEC): despite its local strength (see the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent in the soprano between 7:14 and 8:1) it does nothing to clarify which of the movement’s putative tonics – A minor or E minor – is its real tonal centre.

¹⁰⁵ Caplin, *Classical Form*, p. 99. A classic example of this effect is the subordinate theme of Beethoven’s Op. 2/2, bb. 21–24, in which one can hear dominant and tonic functions simultaneously.

¹⁰⁶ For a comprehensive account of the *Tristan*-esque voice-leading universe, see Chapter 1, Case Study 1.1.

6:10 11 12 13 14 15 16 7:1 2 5 14 15 8:1

failed S (no tonicisation of III) P-based C. Zone

UN

O²⁽³⁾ F#: EEC: 3 2 1

C^{#7} C^{#7} 6 — 5

G: vi/D Coupling prolonging V/G in bass

IV₃⁶ V₄⁶ vi/c# F#: V₇ V₉₉^(no 3rd) i

auxiliary deceptive cadence

Figure 2.12: voice-leading reduction, 6:10–8:1

The overall effect of the secondary theme thus contradicts traditional sonata-form rhetoric, insofar as the pervasive influence of tonal pairing undermines any attempt to establish a clear delineation between tonic-minor P and major-mediant S, which is further deflected by an EEC in a minor key a *semitone below* III. At a thematic level, however, both architectonic and small-scale theme types are plainly discernible (i.e. P, Tr, CF, S, CZ, sentence, contrasting middle, dissolving transition, etc.), which are filled out by clear expressions of intra-thematic formal function (i.e. initiation, continuation, closing, etc.). As Table 2.2 below demonstrates, the outline of a highly conventional sonata-form exposition is evidently present, but, as we have seen in the preceding analysis of local detail, Elgar's use of tonal pairing prevents this model, with its generically associated set of keys, from being cadentially articulated.¹⁰⁷ This results in the attenuation of the exposition's teleological, narrative drive.

¹⁰⁷ As Joel Lester has written of Schumann's music, 'movements without a strong tonal polarity [can] nonetheless have traditional thematic features—simply put, the exposition and recapitulation lay out two themes groups and the development takes them apart. And these novel tonal plans support such thematic narratives to bring the movements to their closes': 'Robert Schumann and Sonata Forms', 208.

Theme	Rehearsal numbers	Formal function / type	Harmony (E minor tonality)
Introduction	0:1–1:1	Sentential	iv-V-i (auxiliary)
A ^{1.1}	0:1–4 (2+2)	Presentation	iv
A ^{1.2}	0:5–8 (2+2)	Extended continuation (model–sequence)	V _{3/3}
A ^{1.3}	0:9–1:1 (2+2+2)	Extended cadential (elided with P)	i
Primary (ABA')	1:1–3:1	Small Ternary	A: i–V–iv–i (plagal) B–A': i–v–VI
A ^{1.1}	1:1–6 (2+2+2)	Presentation	i
A ^{1.2}	1:7–2:1 (2+2+2)	Extended continuation: model (2)–sequence (2) (elided with A ^{1.3})	V
A ^{1.3}	2:1–3:1 (2+2+2+2)	Extended cadential (elided with B ^{1.1})	iv–i
B ^{1.1}	3:1–4	Basic idea (elided with B ^{1.2})	Prolonging i
B ^{1.2}	3:4–8	Contrasting continuation	i → v
B ^{1.1}	3:9–12	Basic idea (elided with repetition of B ^{1.2})	Prolonging v
B ^{1.2}	3:12–17	Contrasting continuation (elided with A ^{1.1})	v → V7/v
A ^{1.1'}	3:17–4:8	Dissolving transition	v → V _A /VI
Caesura Fill	4:9–12	Dominant arrival (standing on the dominant)	V_A/VI
Secondary	5:1–8:1	Loose-knit; Romantic idyll (EEC elided with beginning of CZ)	Pairing (C, e, and G); EEC: F# minor (8:1) (ii/e; #vi/a)
Closing Zone	8:1–8	P-based; model (2)–sequence (2)	Repeated paired cadences in f#

Table 2.2: exposition

§2.3.3 Development

As can be seen in Table 2.3 below, the development follows a common thematic pattern, formalised by William Caplin in *Classical Form*.¹⁰⁸ it can be broken into two cores (common in more extensive development sections), both of which are P-based.

Theme/formal function	Rehearsal	Harmony
Core 1, P: A ^{1.2}	8:9–10:4	Prolongation of A ^{6/4} , 9:1–6 (f _# = vi/A). Chromatically decorated cycle of 5ths starting on A ^{6/4} (9:6) and terminating on G _# ^{4/2} (10:4).
Core 2, P: A ^{1.1} (opening ascending third progression in the violin).	10:5–12	d _# ^{Ø7} → e _# ^{Ø7} → f _# ^{Ø7} → g _# ^{Ø7} → E7 (V _A /A minor)

Table 2.3: development

The first part of Core 1 juxtaposes eight bars of F_# minor with 6 bars of A major (see Example 2.12). Both harmonies are weakly presented, with f_# being prolonged only by a series of superstrong progressions underneath a bass pedal, and A by an exceptionally weak contrapuntal half cadence. The latter half of the first core then initiates a chromatic cycle of fifths (Figure 2.13) in preparation for the second core, which transposes half-diminished seventh chords (prolonged through voice exchange) by ascending step, until the active dominant of A minor is reached (Figure 2.14). This prepares a thematic and harmonic return to both P^{1.1} and A minor at 11:1, which heralds the recapitulation of the introduction. It is unclear, at this juncture, whether A minor is supposed to function as a local tonic or as iv/e.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Caplin, *Classical Form*, pp. 141–155.

¹⁰⁹ Higo Henrique Rodrigues reads the development materials between 9:5 and 10:12 in a similar way. See his ‘Edward Elgar’s Extended Tonal Procedures—An Inquiry Into Elgar’s Chromatic Realm’ (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2014), pp. 95–98.

Core 1

8:9
b.i. repetition (melodies swap parts)

5-prg

Arp.

9:1
b.i. sequenced (new counterpoint) repetition (melodies swap parts)

6-prg

iv/f# III/f# ii/f# i VI/f# v/f#

A: #vii² I² vii⁷ V¹ #vii² I²

weak half cadence

Example 2.12: rehearsal figures 8:9–9:6

9:5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 10:1 2 3 4

model sequel sequel

g^{#4}₂ A⁶ d[#] E⁴ a^{#4}₂ B⁶ e^{#7} F^{#4} b^{#4}₂ C^{#6} f^{#7} G^{#4}

Figure 2.13: bass-line reduction, 9:5–10:4

Core 2

10:5 7 9 11 12 3 11:1

Recap.

d^{#7} e^{#7} f^{#7} a: vii⁷ V i

Figure 2.14: voice-leading reduction, 10:5–11:1

§2.3.4 Recapitulation

Despite its previously subordinate harmonic status in the exposition, A minor emerges as tonic in the recapitulation of the introduction. Figure 2.15 demonstrates that P: A^{1.1} and A^{1.2} articulate a voice exchange: a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ motion in the upper voice is counterpointed with an ascending $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ progression in the bass, which together express horizontally the chord's vertical content. Crucially, the dominant chord at 11:7 is the product of motion from an inner voice: it is prolongational rather than cadential, which ensures that the descent to $\hat{1}$ in the soprano is not mistaken for an *Urlinie* descent.

Figure 2.15: voice-leading reduction, 11:1–8

The middleground voice exchange of P: A^{1.3} effects an inversion of the voice leading of the previous eight bars (see Figure 2.16): an ascending third progression reinstalls the *Kopfton* $\hat{3}$ at the top of the texture at 12:1, with $\hat{1}$ being reintroduced below it in the bass. Most importantly, however, A minor is confirmed by an IAC: there is no suggestion of any other harmony with which it engages in colloquy; it is left to its soliloquy.

Figure 2.16: voice-leading reduction, 11:8–12:1

In consequence, there is no need to repeat the opening sentence in order that its harmonic focus might be clarified: formally speaking, the introduction *becomes* P.¹¹⁰ In one sense, this part of the recapitulation seems to ‘resolve’ the earlier cognitive dissonance immanent in analysis of the introduction (i.e. ‘What key is it in?!’). However, this conceptual form of ‘resolution’ results in a new and different kind of dilemma. Two opposed interpretations of the movement so far are now made possible. Either: 1) the recapitulation begins off-tonic, and must be resolved back to E minor as part of a larger plagal gesture; or 2) the entire exposition should be read as dominant preparation for the arrival of a tonic A minor in the recapitulation (as in a structural auxiliary cadence). It is only the movement’s attainment of an essential structural cadence (ESC), coextensive with the descent of the *Urlinie*, which can decide between these two readings.

As before, P’s contrasting middle secures a weak modulation to the dominant, but A’ (i.e. the dissolving transition) does not slip a third in the bass to the active dominant of VI, as it had done previously, but instead leaps up another fifth to B minor (i.e. ii_5/a) via an $a\sharp^{o6/5}$ chord. As part of the recapitulated S, B minor and G major are paired in exactly the same way as e and C were in the exposition. B’s harmonic identity as a *ii Stufe* in A minor is confirmed at 15:11, when it is appended

¹¹⁰ I use the word ‘becomes’ in Janet Schmalfeldt’s sense. She uses the concept of ‘becoming’ to explain situations in which ‘the formal function initially suggested by a musical idea, phrase, or section invites retrospective reinterpretation within the larger formal context’: see *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 9.

with a natural seventh and its fifth is naturalised ($ii^{06/5}$). It now functions clearly as a pre-dominant in preparation for an A minor ESC: a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent in the upper voice is counterpointed by a $i-V-i$ *Bassbrechung* between 15:14 and 16:1 (Figure 2.17).

Figure 2.17: voice-leading reduction, 15:3–16:1

Given both the failure of the exposition and the general dearth of PACs throughout the movement so far, this moment of structural resolution is all the more impressive.¹¹¹ Similarly, the movement's introduction might now be retrospectively interpreted as being in A minor: the resolution to E minor at 1:1 is a harmonic 'wrong turn' that is only corrected in the recapitulation. Indeed, both the nominal E minor of the sonata's title and the one-sharp key signature, which has persisted throughout, appear to be red herrings. As is also often the case in chamber works by Schumann and Brahms, Elgar's use of tonal pairing in this movement appears to be contextualised by a straightforwardly monotonal background; his take on classical form is overtly romantic, as opposed to modernist.

The ESC is followed by a repeat of earlier development material. Because the movement's *Ursatz* has already closed, this can now be described as a coda, which is followed by a more conventionally coda-like repeat of P material at 19:1,¹¹² prepared by a four-bar V_A dominant lock at 18:9 to 12. This process is seemingly repeated between 20:5 and 14 (see Example 2.13). Although $P^{1.1}$ is re-harmonised, the initial

¹¹¹ The term 'expositional failure' is Hepokoski and Darcy's. It denotes the inability of S to achieve a generically appropriate PAC in the exposition. See *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 177.

¹¹² A similar formal strategy is pursued in the first movement of Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata, Op. 57.

VI is a clear substitute for the tonic, to which the subsequent ii^{o7} chord implies plagally-charged resolution. The double tritones of the French 6th yearn to be restored to the relatively consonant equilibrium of V/a, as does the pre-dominant diminished seventh. An extension, confirmation, perhaps even celebration of A minor's hegemony is anticipated at 21:1.¹¹³

Standing on the dominant

[a] V⁶ → V⁶

p1.1

VI ii⁷ VI Fr⁶ vii³/V

Deceptive cadence

Example 2.13: rehearsal figures 20:5–14

However, the P: A^{1.3}-based passage that closes the movement powerfully reasserts the paired relationship between E minor and A minor which it had earlier suggested in the parallel place in the introduction (see Example 2.14). No longer a product of surface indeterminacy, the un-decidability between these two keys is now asserted as a harmonic–structural problem.¹¹⁴ While the preceding V_A/A-minor-functioning passage (20:8 to 14) encourages us to hear the first chord of this progression as a tonic

¹¹³ I borrow these terms from James Hepokoski, 'Back and Forth from Egmont: Beethoven, Mozart, and the Non-Resolving Recapitulation', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 25, No. 2–3 (2001–02): 127–154, at 134.

¹¹⁴ In this sense, Elgar's first-movement Allegro might be seen to invert the narrative trajectory of Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture. In the latter, tonal resolution is deferred until the coda; in the former, orthodox A-minor resolution in the recapitulation is problematised by the coda.

6/3, which relates back to the key of the earlier ESC, it soon becomes obvious that it functions as iv/e; the reiteration of P^{1.3} prepares a final plagal cadence in the nominal tonic of E minor (modified by a Picardy Third).

21

e:	iv ⁶	II ⁶ /V	V ²	vii ⁷	iv ⁶	II ⁶ /V	V ²	vii ⁷
a:	i ⁶		V ² /V	vii ⁷ /V	etc...			

e:	V ⁷	iv	⁶ / ₅	I ₃
Plagal Cadence				

Example 2.14: rehearsal figures 21:1–end

One can interpret this move positively: A minor and E minor have now both received their own properly cadential closes, after being paired ambiguously in the introduction; the movement's loose ends are finally wrapped up. Indeed, one might even go so far as to say that the plagal resolution in the coda is the movement's *real* tonal close: it 'collapse[s] the preceding, nonclosed sonata [i.e. one in which the recapitulatory S returns in the wrong key] into a mere matrix or disposable delivery system that exists only to make possible that which is conceptually superior, the *Klang-telos* attained in the coda'.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Hepokoski, 'Back and Forth from Egmont', 134. A number of commentators do hear this final moment as providing resolution to the nominal tonic. As Howard Smith puts the case in his liner note

However, there is good reason to doubt such E-minor sanguinity. For example, rather than luxuriating in a moment of final fulfilment, the violin and piano parts are marked triple forte throughout (the loudest dynamic of the movement so far) in what sounds more like a violent eruption than a happy consummation. As Grimley puts it, ‘the terse final bars suggest stern defiance as opposed to heroic inevitability and the last-minute shift to the tonic major is achieved without peroration, enforced through sheer dynamic weight alone’.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, while the ‘failed-recapitulation/redemptive-coda’ paradigm is idiomatic for works such as Beethoven’s *Egmont*, Elgar’s use of tonal pairing throughout the form makes its application highly problematic in this case. Hepokoski presents the argument that *Egmont*’s recapitulation of S is clearly in the wrong key (i.e. a submediant D_b rather than a tonic F minor) as it follows on from a conventional exposition (P/f → S/A_b), hence its ultimate failure, which is later redeemed by a utopian tonic-major apotheosis. However, the a: ESC in Elgar’s first movement sonata-allegro can be heard to resolve the ambiguous tonal colloquy engaged in by the exposition; it is difficult, if not impossible, to recognise it as a moment of structural *failure*. Indeed, as the preceding analysis has attempted to demonstrate, the argument for an overall A minor reading of the movement is stronger, on the whole, than for E minor. Perhaps that is why Elgar marks off the movement’s final E *major* chord as something of an afterthought: it is separated from the preceding iv6/5 by a comma, as if it were syntactically separate, contingent, not altogether convincing.

The sonata principle and tonal pairing, then, which were intertwined at the movement’s beginning, are simply separated out at its end, without any real dialogue remaining: the recapitulation’s S resolves normatively and the ambiguities of tonal pairing are resuscitated only in the coda, after the form’s essentially monotonal quality has already been secured. The E minor hero of the movement’s title has failed in its narrative quest to assert itself as the structural tonic; its aggression is an expression of

to *Elgar: Piano Quintet and Violin Sonata*, Nash Ensemble, CD, Hyperion, CDH55301, ©2007, ‘at the outset Elgar surprises us, adopting a foreign key, A minor, rather than E minor, a stratagem he upholds to within a bar of the movement’s end’ (p. 5). Ian Parrott expresses the matter similarly: ‘Not only does the Violin Sonata start in the “wrong key”—A minor instead of E minor—but it maintains the deception right up to the penultimate bar of the movement’, *Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1971), p. 80.

¹¹⁶ Grimley, ‘The chamber music and works for strings’, p. 131.

impotence rather than of strength. The ‘big words’ suggested by the violin’s muscular comportment at the sonata’s beginning are heard ultimately to ring hollow.

Section 2.4: Conclusions

As demonstrated in the first section of this chapter, Elgar was familiar both with textbook sonata theories and the *sui generis* formal designs of individual composers, such as Schumann and Brahms. This is demonstrated by the close readings provided in Sections 2.2 and 2.3, in which my general argument is that Elgar’s approach to form is traditional and innovative all at once.

In the final movement of his Violin Sonata, Elgar deviates from a textbook sonata model in only one facet: i.e. there is no V: EEC. This results in what Hepokoski and Darcy might term a ‘deformation’ of classical precedent; I characterise it as a form of Ezra-Pound-like ‘translation’ because of the way in which Elgar still invokes the concept of a traditional structural dominant through dissonant, modern-sounding materials. In the first movement, by contrast, Elgar adopts a Schumannesque approach to form. While Schumann’s music cannot usefully be classified as deformational – it often draws not on one but rather a plurality of formal types – I argue that his forms might have appealed to Elgar because they subvert the historically later formalisations of sonata form found in textbooks. A more detailed précis of my analytical findings is given below.

The E major finale appears to follow a relatively traditional textbook sonata key-scheme. P is in the tonic; S prolongs V/V in preparation for a tonicisation of the structural dominant; the development prolongs an active dominant; and the recapitulation marks a return to the tonic, which is later shaded by subdominant-side inflections. While being elided with a strong, descending fifth motion in the bass from F# to B, however, the closing zone does not tonicise the dominant; the passage in question is sequential and dissonant. Closer inspection, however, reveals that the closing zone is chaperoned by a descending E Lydian scale in the bass, which is macroharmonically identical to the diatonic collection of B major. In consequence, I argue that this passage is both aurally dissonant and structurally V-like: i.e. it provides an oblique reference to a tonicised dominant through its middleground scale, but it also emphasises V’s originally dissonant quality – dimmed both by over-repetition and

by comparison with the modern, more intense dissonances of the early twentieth century – through a series of descending, non-diatonically related triads on the surface. In other words, it translates ‘V’ into a new musical language; traditional concepts are not abandoned but are rather expressed both more intensely and in a more modern way.

In the Violin Sonata’s opening movement, by contrast, Elgar seems to recreate with relative fidelity the sonata-form aesthetic pioneered by Schumann and Brahms in their own chamber works. The usual narrative energy and teleology generated by the juxtaposition of two opposing tonalities, so fundamental to textbook theories of sonata form, is attenuated by tonal pairing. From the very outset of the movement, it is virtually impossible to tell whether E minor or A minor is the work’s tonic, so closely are the tonal significations of the one imbricated with the other. Despite the fact that Elgar sustains this indeterminate colloquy until the recapitulation – far longer than is usual for either Schumann or Brahms – the movement does achieve an essential structural close; its background is ultimately monotonal and thus romantic rather than modernist in sensibility. However, this apparent emulation of tradition acquires a new charge in the war-time climate in which the sonata was written. During the First World War, many had become suspicious of teleological narratives, which seemed unable to represent both combatants’ and civilians’ experiences: the conflict was at once static, repetitive, and seemingly lacked a distinct moral purpose; it did not move heroically towards a pre-established goal. In this context, I argue that the structural chicanery facilitated by tonal pairing, which could so poignantly disrupt the narrative teleology implicit in textbook sonata-form designs, may have become attractive to Elgar because of its musically subversive potential. The form attempts to trace a narrative arc, but its harmonic and voice-leading contents fight against it at every twist and turn. As such, Elgar was not only emulating Schumannesque sonata-form tradition but also re-contextualising it. In doing so, he stresses the continual ability of the past to comment meaningfully on the present: that is to say, old forms can become modernist in spirit, if not in content, owing to the historical contexts in which they are deployed.

Chapter 3: Tonality and (the) ‘Beyond’: Elgar’s *Gerontius* and String Quartet *Piacevole*



Figure 3.1: Edward Burne-Jones, ‘Bogey come home with the wash’, 1864

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While the work of the pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones is usually associated with virtuosic depictions of colourful dream worlds, his 1864 ‘Bogey drawings’, by contrast, are monochrome, simple, and domestic in setting. No longer stereotyped and forced to reside in miasmas or gothic ruins, one of Burne-Jones’s ghosts is ‘neatly folded up in a drawer’, having been mistaken for a shirt (see Figure 3.1).¹ It exhibits no agency or purpose; it is simply there. I focus here on two possible divergent interpretations of the bogey’s meaning:

¹ Georgina Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, Vol. I., (London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1906), pp. 272–273.

1. The child has, to her horror, uncovered what looks like a ghost among the clothing, but the adult viewer, who stands outside the sketch, knows better than to be scared. The bogey's domestication robs it of its otherworldly terror; the supernatural can be reduced to a mere play of shadow among the folds of a garment.
2. Not yet blinkered by the pseudo-rationality of adulthood, the child has seen this 'household' object for what it truly is. The interplay between reality and illusion inherent in the ghost's form is subtly yet eerily constitutive of some of the home's most banal artefacts, such as clothing; the familiar is revealed to be strange.²

The first interpretation suggests that Burne-Jones's sketch is intended whimsically: supernatural figures are often chimeras, pieced together from the mundane odds and ends of past experience; entities which initially seem to possess mysterious powers of intangibility look much like crumpled laundry when examined more closely.³ The second interpretation, by contrast, treats the figure of the bogey more gravely. It maintains that the extraordinary cannot be reduced to the ordinary because the latter is extraordinary to begin with. How many quotidian objects hold strange metaphysical secrets at their core? Harold Monro's 1915 poem *Trees*, for example, similarly elucidates ghosts which reside at the heart of the human home:

They [i.e. trees] follow us and haunt us. We must build
Houses of wood. Our evening rooms are filled
With fragments of the forest: chairs and tables.
We swing our wooden doors;

² The art historian, Susan Owens, interprets this drawing in much the same way: it suggests that 'not even the most prosaic places within the home were safe'. See *The Ghost: A Cultural History* (London: Tate Publishing, 2017), p. 194.

³ In describing the representation of aliens in Western culture, for example, Terry Eagleton notes that the life forms of other planets 'may have bulbous heads and triangular eyes, speak in a chillingly robotic monotone or emit a strong stench of sulphur, but otherwise they look much like Tony Blair. Creatures capable of travelling for light years turn out to have heads, limbs, eyes and voices. Their spacecraft can navigate black holes but tend to crash in the Nevada desert. [...] Their occupants take a curiously familiar interest in examining human genitals, and tend to deliver vague, waffling messages about the need for world peace, like a UN Secretary-General'. See *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) p. 59. This line of argument applies just as much to literary representations of utopia: see Fredric Jameson, *A Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 24.

Pile up, divide our sheds, byres, stables
With logs, make wooden stairs, lay wooden floors,
Sit, move, and sleep among the limbs of trees,
Rejoicing to be near them. How men saw,
Chisel and hammer, carve and tease
All timber to their purpose, modelling
The forest in their chambers. And the raw
Wild stuff, built like a cupboard or a shelf,
Will crack and shiver in the night, and sing,
Reminding everybody of itself;
Out of decayed old centuries will bring
A sudden memory
Of growing tree.⁴

Ostensibly domestic rooms are haunted by the primordial songs of Nature, transmitted to us in the creaking of a floorboard or a bedstead. They serve to startle awake human trespassers in Nature's world and to prevent restful sleep. Coincidentally, the girl's clothes, pictured in the 'Bogey' sketch, are of the same grain as the chest of drawers; her feet are tangled almost like tree roots and her hair has a foliate wildness. It is as if the artist is trying to highlight her (paradoxically) otherworldly naturalness, which stands against the artificial realism of adulthood. She turns to the right of the picture not only to avoid gazing on the ghost, but because she cannot bring herself to look into the mirror on the table top, as she knows she will not belong in the domestic scene which is reflected back at her. We need not look to the 'Beyond' to engage with the supernatural. If only we could be sensitive to it, we would realise that it is enmeshed within our reality.

These rival readings of Burne-Jones's sketch provide a useful conceptual framework within which to interrogate the different attitudes to tonality which are exhibited in the preludes to Parts I and II of Edward Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900) and the middle movement of his later String Quartet, Op. 83 (1918). My reasons for comparing these works are three-fold:

⁴ Harold Monro, *Strange Meetings: Poems by Harold Monro*, ed. Dominic Hibberd (Wiltshire: Laurel Books, 2013), p. 58.

Firstly, they are specifically contrasted by one of the first Elgar scholars, Diana McVeagh, whose work was foundational for many of the studies that came after hers. Reflecting on the chamber works (including the String Quartet) in 1955, she wrote that they are ‘conservative, especially harmonically. *They break no new ground and are considerably less modern than, say, Gerontius.*’⁵ Taken together, these apparently opposing compositions are thought to exemplify the perceived dichotomies which animate Elgar’s musical career: namely, the polar pulls of tradition and innovation; the rival claims of the orchestra and of various permutations of chamber ensemble on his musical imagination; his desire to reconcile his music with recent continental trends versus his simultaneous marked indifference to them; and the apparent qualitative disparities between his second- and third-period styles. These are the very dichotomies which this thesis has sought both to deconstruct and to challenge.

Secondly, close reading demonstrates that such binaries are unhelpfully reductive. The antagonisms generated by *Gerontius*’s chromatic surfaces are often synthesised in background diatonicism. In the *Piacevole*, by contrast, conventional voice-leading formulae and harmonies can be shown to misalign with one another to such an extent that monotonal syntax is quietly dethroned. As such, it is difficult to read the movement’s background as prolonging any one key; traditional rhetoric becomes uncoupled from traditional structure. Thus, while both works display a nuanced attitude towards tradition (and towards diatonicism, in particular), *Gerontius* seems to demonstrate a more fundamental commitment to the past than does the *Piacevole*: the former is shaped by background diatonicism; the latter lacks a monotonal skeleton.

Thirdly, the strong contrapuntal and textural affinities between the String Quartet’s *Piacevole* and the prelude to Act II of *Gerontius* make it possible to interpret the former as an intertext for the latter. This opens up a potentially fascinating hermeneutic window. *Gerontius* sets the eponymous 1865 poem by John Henry Newman, which details the soul’s journey from deathbed to purgatory. Elgar explores its myriad oppositions between the corporeal and the celestial by pitting two musical syntaxes against one another: namely, diatonicism and chromaticism. Chromaticism

⁵ Diana McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1955), 179–80, my italics.

can sometimes undermine the conventional tonality (i.e. a type of musical organisation centred on a single pitch or chord, which is isomorphic with the centred experience of an individual human subject⁶) that is often seen to be synonymous with diatonicism. As already intimated, however, and as I will demonstrate in detail in my analysis of the first part of the prelude to Part I, this opposition is often illusory: chromaticism (and the altered or decentred mode of experience it can sometimes imply) tends to be subordinate to diatonicism at a deeper structural level; Elgar carefully crafts the 'Beyond' so as to ensure that it can still resolve back into the ordinary. It is the prelude to Part II, however, which is perhaps most indicative of the music's fundamental commitment to diatonic tonality. It sets the scene for Gerontius's awakening from the sleep of death and his consequent discovery of a new condition in which all bodily sensations that had once reassured him of his wholeness have been stripped away. Elgar's prelude, however, composes-out a gently articulated F major tonality: its functionally-articulated *Stufen* stand in poignantly ironic contrast to the decentred state which they are intended sonically to represent. This tension between music and text can in no way be regarded as an aesthetic failure: *Gerontius* might be interpreted as a form of musical text criticism, in which Elgar inflects Newman's Christian metaphysics toward the human in subtle but meaningful ways, by virtue of the music's commitment to the earthly pull of tonal gravity, over and above ethereal, chromatic dissolution. Still, the listener is left with an interesting (albeit hypothetical) question to ponder: what if Elgar had chosen to emphasise the problems Gerontius's interstitial being creates for musical representation, rather than to emphasise the possibility of redemption through a form of tonal writing synonymous with resolution?

Written much later in his career, the opening theme of the String Quartet's *Piacevole* (1918) provides us with a potential answer to this question, because of its striking similarities with *Gerontius*'s second prelude. The temporal distance between them is bridged by the use of an instrumental texture – three-part counterpoint for strings alone – that is otherwise unique in Elgar's output. However, while the *Piacevole* even emulates many of the prelude's voice-leading gestures at a

⁶ Kevin Korsyn, 'The Death of Musical Analysis? The Concept of Unity Revisited', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2004): 337–351, at 338–339.

middleground level, the articulation of these is sometimes clouded and sometimes even undermined by ambiguous surface details. As a result, its structural levels are incongruent: the analyst cannot map from part to whole or vice versa. Even though individual details and sometimes even whole passages are suggestive of traditional forms of harmony or voice leading, their cumulative effect is often decidedly unconventional. The tonality of the past lives on only as a dissimulating spectre, which makes the ambiguous and surprisingly modern relationships immanent in the score's notation appear merely functional. Elgar had then, after eighteen years, developed a predominantly diatonic mode of writing which was nevertheless capable of expressing the liminality which *Gerontius* ultimately rejects for music-ironic effect. Elgar might not have intended to represent the 'Beyond' in the *Piacevole*, as he had done in *Gerontius*, but he had fashioned a musical language which went *beyond* tonality while still appearing reassuringly diatonic and familiar. For these reasons, it would have well expressed Gerontius's decentred-ness after death, along with the muted promise, which the oratorio's second prelude conveys so well, that his soul may eventually be saved.

The Burne-Jones sketch at the beginning of this chapter helps both to encapsulate and to make more palpable the abstract structures of the oratorio and the String Quartet. In the first interpretation of Burne-Jones's sketch, the extraordinary is ultimately reducible to the ordinary, much as surface chromatic ambiguity is resolved by background diatonicism in *Gerontius*. The Quartet's middle movement, by contrast, uses traditional diatonic language to undermine those cadential voice-leading formulae which are generally understood to instantiate tonality. As in the second interpretation of Burne-Jones's sketch, that which is taken to be ordinary is in fact extraordinary.

Section 3.1: *Gerontius*

Elgar's oratorio begins at the end of Gerontius's life; the Latinised Greek word 'Gerontius' means 'old man'. Its first part ends with his final death-throes and his succumbing to the sleep of death. In its second part, his soul awakens, disembodied, in a world seemingly without duration or extension. Escorted by an Angel, he is taken towards God's chamber to be judged. After being exposed to His purity for a single instant, Gerontius begs the Angel to take him away to be cleansed in the fires of

purgatory. Newman's poem ends with the following words, as the Angel submerges Gerontius in a lake of fire which emits no light: 'Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here, / And I will come and wake thee on the morrow'.⁷

A series of oppositions animates Newman's poem: the gap between supernal and corporeal worlds in which one resides after one's death and before the presentation of one's immortal soul before God; the alloy that is the human subject itself as a 'strange composite of heaven and earth!';⁸ the liminal state of purgatory; and the ambiguous intermixture of pain and pleasure that is experienced when in contact with the divine.⁹

The opening prelude of *Gerontius* might seem to encapsulate such tensions by placing different modes of pitch organisation in conflict with one another. Sections based on major and minor diatonicism, for example, which are suggestive of classical tonality, rub up against chromatic or hexatonic passages in which orthodox kinds of functional progression become impossible (i.e. I–IV–V–I). However, I demonstrate that such opposition is often not irreducible; chromaticism and hexatonicism are generally subordinate to traditional diatonicism at a deeper middleground level. Far from providing a representation of Newman's conception of a mystic 'Beyond', which exceeds the limits of conventional human understanding, Elgar's more adventurous harmonic experiments can usually be shown to embellish a thoroughly classical framework, which had been the basis of Western musical understanding across the whole of the previous century. Much as in the first interpretation of Burne-Jones's 'Bogey' drawing, outlined in the previous section, the new and the unfamiliar remain ultimately reducible to the old and the known.

Prelude to Part I

The 'Fear' motif from *Gerontius*'s opening Prelude marks the first instance of a wholly chromatic progression in the oratorio.¹⁰ According to Diana McVeagh, it 'contradict[s] its own tonality' as it goes and produces 'an effect of uncertainty, of the

⁷ John Henry Newman, *Cardinal Newman's Dream of Gerontius* (New York: Schwartz, Kirwin & Fauss, 1916 [1865]), p. 70.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁹ As the Angel puts it to *Gerontius*, 'that sight of the Most Fair / Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee too [...] Learn that the flame of Everlasting Love / Doth burn ere it transform. . . .': *ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁰ I derive names for Elgar's leitmotifs from the analytical notes written by Elgar's close friend and publisher, August Jaeger (1900).

unknown'.¹¹ As illustrated by the labels and slurs underneath the piano reduction in Example 3.1, this motif consists of the transposition of a major triad up a whole tone, followed by a shift to the resultant triad's hexatonic pole (i.e. A \flat to B \flat to f \sharp).¹² Accommodating for a couple of modal alterations (i.e. f \sharp goes to G \sharp instead of g \sharp , while e goes to F \sharp , etc.), this relational model is then sequentially repeated until the fifth-based resolution to B major at 2:3.

Example 3.1: Elgar, *The Dream of Gerontius*, Part I, 'Fear motif', rehearsal figures 2:1–3

The voice-leading zone numbers labelled above the staff in Example 3.1 correspond to the diagram of pitch space provided in Figure 3.2, which is divided into twelve zones like a clock face.¹³ The strength of this diagram is that it elucidates clearly the relative voice-leading distance between any two triads.

¹¹ Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), p. 68.

¹² A hexatonic-polar relationship exists between any major triad (e.g. B \flat) and any minor triad built on the flattened sixth degree of the earlier major triad's eponymous scale (e.g. f \sharp /g \flat is $\flat\hat{6}$ of the B \flat major scale). The term 'hexatonic' refers to a six-note scale based on alternating minor thirds and semitones (i.e. B \flat , D \flat /C \sharp , D \sharp , F \sharp and F \sharp). From these six notes, six triadic chords can be derived: namely, B \flat major, D minor, D major, F \sharp minor, F \sharp major, B \flat minor, and B \flat major, which marks a return to the beginning of the cycle. Chord-to-chord connection in this sequence is achieved by moving a single voice in the chord by a semitone (i.e. the smallest increment of musical distance possible in the equally-tempered system). Such semitonal movement results in two kinds of transformation, used in alternation. A leading tone transformation (labelled L) takes the root of the major triad (e.g. B \flat in a B \flat major chord) down by a semitone, thus producing the fifth of a D minor triad (i.e. D and F are held over while B \flat goes to A) and vice versa. A parallel transformation (labelled P) changes the mode of a triad: minor triads (e.g. D–F–A) become major (D–F \sharp –A) or vice versa. If a hexatonic progression begins on B \flat , then F \sharp minor is the chord which is furthest away from it in the chordal cycle. Three transformations (either LPL or PLP) are required to bridge the two. Hence the ascription 'polar': they mark the two points of furthest remove in a chordal sequence.

¹³ This diagram is based on Jack Douthett's and Peter Steinbach's Cube Dance ('Parsimonious Graphs: A Study in Parsimony, Contextual Transformations, and Modes of Limited Transposition', *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 42, No. 2 [1998]: 241–263, at 253–254) and its further development by Richard

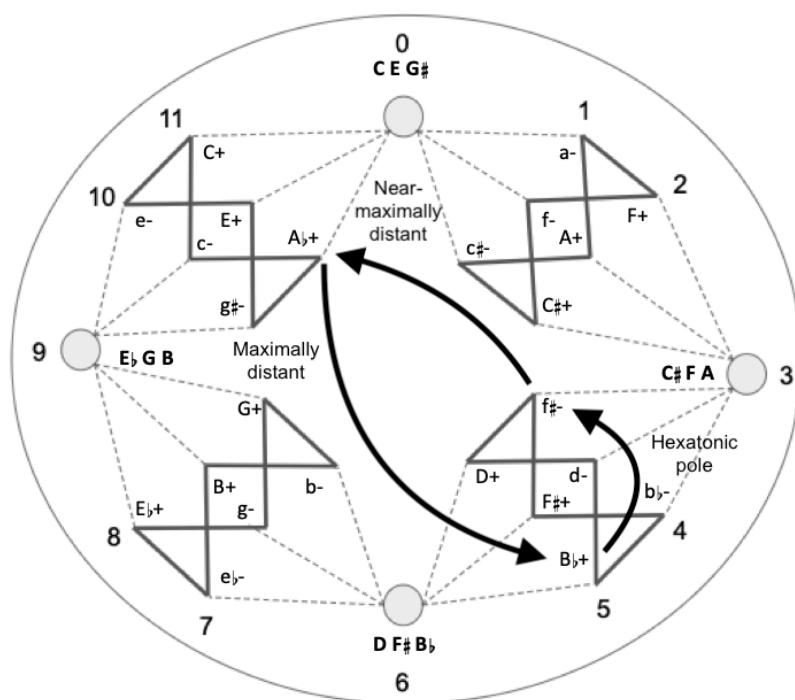


Figure 3.2: Cube Dance diagram based on Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, fig. 5.24, p. 104

As indicated in Figure 3.2, the ‘Fear’ motif utilises three different kinds of transformation between triads:

1. diametric opposition (as between A_{\flat} and B_{\flat} in Zones 5 and 11 respectively) which requires six semitonal units of voice-leading work to be performed (i.e. the maximal amount possible while still maintaining the use of recognisable major and minor triads);
2. near-diametric opposition (as between f_{\sharp} and G_{\sharp} in Zones 4 and 11), which requires five; and
3. hexatonic-polar opposition (as between B_{\flat} and f_{\sharp} in Zones 5 and 4), which requires three.

Cohn (*Audacious Euphony: Chromaticism and the Consonant Triad’s Second Nature*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], p. 104.) It demonstrates how one can reduce the twenty-four possible chords in an equally-tempered harmonic universe to just four augmented triads (see Zones 0, 3, 6 and 9 on the clock face). Each augmented triad yields six consonant triads – three major and three minor – if any one its voices is toggled up or down by a semitone (e.g. $C-E-G_{\sharp}$ can resolve either to A minor or to C major, depending on whether G_{\sharp} is resolved upwards or downwards). The three major triads at Zone 11, for example (i.e. C, E and A_{\flat} , which are produced by various resolutions of the augmented triad at Zone 12) belong to a hexatonic system (defined in footnote 12), inclusive of three more minor triads (Zone 10) that are produced by resolutions of the augmented triad at Zone 9.

These harmonic transformations are so effective because, although they differ in terms of voice-leading cardinality, they preserve no pitch classes in common between adjacent chords. This makes it difficult (especially after sequential repetition) to experience the music as being ‘in a key’, both because of the lack of consecutive emphasis on any single pitch and because this sequence traverses the entire chromatic gamut, which means that no single diatonic scale can be taken as a source to which everything else might be reduced.

While hexatonic poles are close in zonal terms (i.e. they are not as ‘distant’ from one another as are diametrically opposed triads) they are still piquant in quality. This is because each of its two chords contain the other’s leading tone and flattened sixth as part of their own chord content (see Figure 3.3).¹⁴ As such, they strongly imply resolution to one another (i.e. a movement from dissonance to consonance). Because the first triad of this pair is often heard as a stable consonance, however, subsequent movement to its hexatonic pole can also sound harmonically unstable: the latter dissonates with the projected diatonic collection immanent in the former, which is imagined either as a local tonic or as a *Stufe* within another diatonic key.¹⁵ In Richard Cohn’s words, this makes hexatonic poles ‘simultaneously alien and hyper-proximate’: they imply consonant resolution and dissonant departure simultaneously.¹⁶

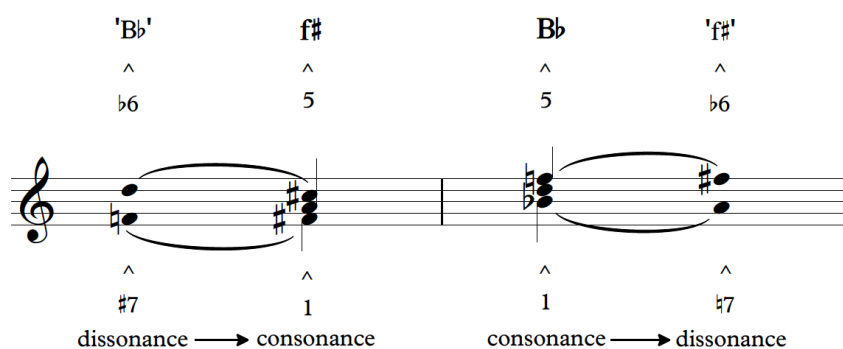


Figure 3.3: hexatonic pole voice-leading diagram

¹⁴ Richard Cohn, ‘Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 285–324, at 307.

¹⁵ Cohn describes the likely responses an enculturated listener might have to hearing a lone triad in *Audacious Euphony*, pp. 8–9.

¹⁶ Cohn, ‘Uncanny Resemblances’, 318.

At a deeper structural level, the harmonic goal of the ‘Fear’ motif (i.e. B major) functions as the root of a middleground chromatic-third cycle, each station of which is decorated by a Neapolitan chord with subdominant function (see Figure 3.4, rehearsal figures 2:3 to 3:4).¹⁷ Some theorists might describe this passage as essentially hexatonic because the combined pitch aggregate of its three principal harmonies – namely, B major, E \flat major and G major – yields a hexatonic scale (i.e. B, D, E \flat , F \sharp , G, B \flat). Due to its unusual intervallic layout, which alternates semitones with minor thirds, this scale might be thought to undermine the diatonic basis of classical tonality, as its pitches cannot be arranged so as to produce conventional forms of tonic–dominant relationship.

Figure 3.4: voice-leading reduction, 2:3–3:4

However, as Matthew Brown argues, scales ‘have little power to explain the behaviour of specific notes or chords’ in and of themselves.¹⁸ While the strong association between tonality and diatonicism is a defining feature of the classical aesthetic, it is by no means a natural law; it remains ‘entirely possible’, claims Dmitri Tymoczko, ‘to write diatonic music in which no note is heard as a tonal centre, just as one can write chromatic music with a very clear centre’.¹⁹ Indeed, rather than establishing a state of

¹⁷ The pL label attached to each local subdominant indicates that its mode is changed to minor through a parallel transformation and that its fifth is then raised a semitone by a leading-tone transformation; the letter cases used in the graph denote whether a transformation produces a minor- (lowercase) or major (uppercase) triad.

¹⁸ Matthew Brown, *Explaining Tonality: Schenkerian Theory and Beyond* (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2005), p. 146.

¹⁹ Dmitri Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 16.

hexatonic ‘non-tonality’, the passage in question departs from and then returns to B major in a manner that seems almost prolongational. Despite their chromaticism, the upper-sharp and lower-flat mediant²⁰ (i.e. E_b and G) indicated in Figure 3.4 might be heard as being isomorphic with the tonic’s dominant: i.e. each retains one common tone with the tonic in much the same way that the dominant preserves the fifth of the tonic as its root, and their other two chord tones displace the tonic’s remaining scale degrees outwards in contrary semitonal motion, which mimics the $\hat{7}-\hat{1} / \hat{4}-\hat{3}$ voice leading of a dominant moving to its tonic (or vice versa).²¹ As such, they are capable of marking out the tonic aurally as a structural consonance, in a process that is reminiscent of tonicisation, at least from a voice-leading point of view.

The argument for this passage’s tonal quality is bolstered when its broader harmonic function as part of an overarching diatonic progression is considered. Elgar once compared chromatic-third cycles to waterwheels which are affixed to a ‘tonal’ house.²² This provides a powerful analytical metaphor for coming to terms with the tonality of the Prelude’s opening. Figure 3.5 demonstrates that the chromatic prolongation of B major by waterwheel thirds (2:3 to 3:4) attaches to and helps to power a larger tonal structure – namely, a linear composing out of D major in the bass (A–B–C#–D, 1:7 to 4:1) after an inauthentic perfect cadence in D minor – as a doubly mixed VI *Stufe*.²³ Despite Elgar’s exploitation both of distant triadic relations at the level of the foreground and of a syntactic conflict between diatonicism and hexatonicism at the level of the middleground, chromatic novelties serve ultimately to spice an otherwise conventional diatonic base.

²⁰ Upper-sharp mediant denotes a chord built on the third degree of the tonic scale, which has its mode altered to major; lower-flat mediant denotes a major triad built on the flattened sixth degree of the tonic scale (i.e. three scale steps below the tonic).

²¹ See David Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1–17; 229–234.

²² See the analysis of the Violin Sonata’s Romance in Chapter 1, Case Study 1.3.

²³ While the bass A at 1:7 is not literally present in that register, I have included it as part of the bass’s linear progression because motion from tonic (i.e. D) to its relative minor (i.e. B minor, modified in this instance by P) always involves a $\hat{5}-\hat{6}$ voice-leading motion, even if the relevant notes (i.e. B and A) are not registrally contiguous with one another.

Figure 3.5: middleground graph 0:5–4:1

Prelude to Part II

Nowhere in *Gerontius* is its commitment to key-centricity and traditional diatonicism more apparent than in the prelude to Part II, which represents the moment at which Gerontius’s soul leaves his body and is caught in the interstices between corporeality and incorporeality. In Julius Gliebe’s words, the soul hears ‘from the one side [nothing] but the faint echoes of earthly voices and on the other it has before it the infinite stretch of the undiscoverable country’.²⁴ Indeed, according to Aidan Thomson’s survey of the work’s reception in Germany, this part of the score was often deemed to lack ‘the necessary other-worldliness’, even though the rest of Elgar’s setting was roundly praised.²⁵ Elgar’s musical rendering of this moment, it was claimed, is too reliant on conventional tonal effects to capture much of this ambiguity. As already pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, however, Elgar’s adherence to diatonic syntax at this juncture is best read as a conscious decision to emphasize the potential redemption of humanity, over and above the material dissolution implied by Newman’s pessimistic theology. The following analysis seeks to illustrate how this is achieved.

As can be seen in Figure 3.6, the articulation of an F major tonality is clear-cut even in the Prelude’s initial basic idea. The bass touches on weak inversions of subdominant and dominant harmonies as part of a repeated linear motion of a third up to the tonic root (D–E–F), while the upper voice ascends via an arpeggiation to the

²⁴ Newman, *Dream of Gerontius*, p. 18.

²⁵ Aidan J. Thomson, ‘“Proficiscere, anima Christiana”: *Gerontius* and German Mysticism’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 138, No. 2 (2013), 275–312, at 277.

Kopfton $\hat{5}$ (decorated with an upper neighbour note) at 1:5. A strong, root-position cadential progression follows, supported by a fifth descent in the upper voice, albeit that it culminates not in a perfect but rather a deceptive cadence. Despite spotlighting it with an accent, $\hat{2}$'s presentation is harmonically weak: it is sounded over chord ii rather than the dominant and it is presented as a neighbour note to the tonic rather than as an independent descending scale step. Despite such subtle sabotage, no ambiguity results: I and vi share the same key signature (i.e. the same diatonic collection is retained) and the linear descent from C \sharp at 1:5 clearly expresses the fifth of F major despite the 'incorrect' harmonisation provided at its terminal point.

Figure 3.6: voice-leading reduction, *The Dream of Gerontius*, Part II, 1:4–12

When this four-bar idea is repeated at 1:8, it resolves to the correct triad, but it does not receive the strong root-position support of the earlier cadence: the tonic is prolonged by neighbour-note motion (I–V $^{6/3}$ –I between 1:11 and 12) before being shaded negatively by a juxtaposition with its relative minor. A two-bar idea is then dwelt on obsessively between 2:1 and 6 (see Example 3.2). While its oscillation between ii and V can be heard initially as a pre-dominant–dominant progression in preparation for a tonic close, the bareness of its repetition ultimately deprives this gesture of any cadential force. By virtue of its saturation of the texture, G minor slowly emerges as a candidate for a new tonicisation.

Example 3.2: rehearsal figures 2:1–3:4

At 2:7 such premonitions appear to be vindicated: E \flat s are woven into the passage's harmonic fabric as part of a V–I progression to IV/B \flat (i.e. G minor's relative), which links as a pre-dominant to the F7 chord that is then outlined as an arpeggiation in the upper voice. This gives the sequence of 9–10 suspensions between 2:7 and 8 a feeling of harmonic purpose that culminates in a strong arrival on B \flat (IV/F) at 3:1, albeit that the relevant PAC is elided with the repetition of the prelude's initial basic idea, now transposed to the subdominant. Its pedal B \flat rises up to a C as part of a pre-dominant to dominant neighbour-note motion at 3:3, but resolution to the tonic at 3:4 is once again evaded.

Rather than conveying otherworldly stillness in this prelude, free of 'the busy beat of time', Elgar composes out a number of clearly metred progressions.²⁶ Rather than anticipating the diffuse state of being described by Gerontius – 'I cannot stir a hand or foot, / I cannot make my fingers or my lips / By mutual pressure witness each to each, / Nor by the eyelid's instantaneous stroke / Assure myself have body still'²⁷ –

²⁶ Newman, *Dream of Gerontius*, p. 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Elgar's music is firmly centred. While F major is never confirmed structurally as a tonic, its control of the voice-leading territory directly beneath the musical surface is absolute. If this prelude is supposed to constitute a representation of the 'Beyond', as some critics have argued it should, it is one that reveals an inability to imagine a world in excess of that which is made possible by orthodox means of musical representation. Considered from a different perspective, this passage can be heard to push back against Newman's emphasis on the dissolution of the self, through its emphasis on a single pitch class. This compositional decision on Elgar's part poses a fascinating hypothetical question to the listener: what would this second-act prelude have sounded like should Elgar have chosen to emphasise Gerontius's newly decentered existential state, rather than his potential redemption and his humanity? The following section seeks to provide an answer.

Section 3.2: Piacevole

The Piacevole's opening theme, which is repeated and developed throughout the movement, invites comparison with the prelude to Part II of *Gerontius* on account of its similar use of texture, instrumentation, mood (*tranquillo* and *piacevole*, respectively), voice-leading structures, and pure triadicism, as well as its emphasis on the interchangeability of the tonic and its relative at points of resolution. In view of the lack of available written evidence, however, it is impossible to say whether Elgar intended the prelude to be an intertext for the Piacevole. My argument here is simply that the latter is markedly similar to the former (i.e. they use similar musical materials to express a muted promise of redemption or confirmation, synonymous with tonal resolution) while exemplifying the kinds of ambiguity which *Gerontius*'s second prelude rejects as part of its pursuit of a more overtly humanist theological agenda. Rather than attempting literally to represent the 'Beyond', however, the Piacevole instead forges a diatonic language which goes beyond tonality. Such aesthetic comparison serves a useful critical purpose: namely, to demonstrate that the String Quartet's middle movement is in certain respects more innovative than one of the most famous of Elgar's middle-period works, with which his later corpus is sometimes negatively contrasted. A voice-leading reduction of its opening theme is provided at Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7 is a voice-leading reduction of a passage from Elgar's String Quartet, Op. 83, 2nd movement, measures -1 to 19:2. The score is presented in two staves (treble and bass clef). Above the staves, a sequence of boxed numbers indicates measure numbers: [-:1], 3, 4, 5, 6, 18:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 19:1, 2. A large bracket labeled "Tonal parenthesis (18:1 to 12)" spans from measure 18:1 to 19:2. The reduction includes various annotations: "IOD in C:" in the upper left; "5" and "5" above the first and last measures respectively; "5-6" and "N" above the first staff; "Interlocking linear progressions" with arrows pointing to specific melodic lines; "e minor (V/a):" above the chord symbols; and "deceptive cadence" and "substitute dominant" below the chord symbols. The chord symbols are: iii, vii⁶, I⁷, vii, vi, ii, V, vi, vii⁷/C, I, iii. A box labeled "e minor (V/a):" contains the symbols: iv, ii⁷, V⁷, (V⁷/III, III, VI, iv), ii⁷V⁷, I⁷/C.

Figure 3.7: voice-leading reduction, Elgar, String Quartet, Op. 83, 2nd movement, -:1–19:2

Like the prelude to Part II, the *Piacevole* begins with an arpeggiation of the tonic chord in its upper voice. This spotlights the *Kopfton*, $\hat{5}$, in preparation for a local fifth descent to $\hat{1}$, which coincides with the deceptive cadence at 18:2. As in the prelude, its opening theme does not effect a strong and cadential close between root-position harmonies, but its overall tonality (i.e. C major) seems secure at a level beneath the surface, due (in this case) to the composing out of a middleground initial-order descent (i.e. a linear motion from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ in an inner voice, with $\hat{5}$ being reintroduced above it in the upper voice at the moment of melodic completion) between -:1 and 19:2. Taken any further, however, comparison between these two passages soon becomes strained. Various of the *Piacevole*'s foreground details complicate the traditional subcutaneous voice-leading structure it appears to share with the prelude. When viewed in isolation, most of these details can be reconciled with conventions present in earlier music, but their cumulative effect serves to attenuate monotonal focus in a novel way. The *Kopfton* is harmonised by chord iii, rather than by the tonic and while the presentation of F's relative in the prelude to Part II is only ever fleeting and contrapuntal, the nascent importance of C's relative is signified by the attempted

tonicisation of its minor dominant between 18:3 and 7.²⁸ Indeed, the music following on from the sounding of $\hat{2}$ over V at -:6 might be described as a tonal parenthesis, in which A minor's dominant completely takes over the foreground. If this music were expunged, the two C major sections would join up neatly. Its inclusion, though, spawns several ambiguities which make its overall voice-leading function more difficult to decipher than that of a simple prolongation of v/vi.

The A and the D \sharp of the unfolded dominant seventh (18:4 to 6), for example, should resolve to G \sharp and E, respectively. However, A moves to G \natural as part of a C major sonority (18:7). Andrew Colton suggests that 'the belated appearance of the tonic [here] sounds like it could almost be a mistake', rather than a confirmation of the passage's overall tonic focus.²⁹ Indeed, one might argue that the C major triad at the beginning of this bar is just a chromatic passing chord. After its sounding, a pedal C is retained in the bass voice while the upper voices outline a sonority which blends two chords together: E7 (the previously anticipated resolution of the B7) which points towards A minor, and b $^{\circ 7}$, which alludes to C major. This harmony can be figured as a hexachord: C–E–D–B–A \flat /G \sharp –F, but it is difficult (at this point) to hear it as anything other than a decorated dominant seventh occurring over a pedal. The E of violin 2 is prolonged by D and B at 18:7, after which an upper-neighbour-note F falls to E at 18:8; G \natural moves to G \sharp as a lower neighbour in an inner voice. At 18:12, however, the E \natural disappears and the hexachord becomes a leading-tone diminished seventh over a tonic pedal. Two interlocking linear progressions are drawn in, between 18:11 to 12, to illustrate the ambiguity of this moment. To borrow a phrase of Cohn's from a different musical context, the transformation between these two chords 'is located everywhere and nowhere; it is distributed in some sense across the time it takes to reorient our interpretation' from an A minor to a C major listening context.³⁰ As such, it seems appropriate to resurrect the possibility of a middleground connection with the 'passing chord' at 18:7, which is prolonged throughout by the bass pedal.

²⁸ There is precedent for harmonising the *Kopfton* (Headtone) with the mediant in Schenker's own practice. See his graph of Brahms's Op. 118, No. 1 in *Free Composition: Supplement Musical Examples*, ed. & trans. Ernst Oster (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 1979 [1935]), Fig. 110^{d3}.

²⁹ Andrew Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style' (Ph.D. dissertation, The Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1995), p. 48.

³⁰ Cohn, 'Uncanny Resemblances', 317.

At 18:12, a written G \sharp is heard as an A \flat , which is expected to resolve to the fifth of C major at 19:1. The quality of this resolution is problematic, however, as the necessary G \natural is only implied. To complicate matters, an A \natural is sounded on the third beat of the bar, meaning that it is also possible to rationalise the acoustic signal, heard earlier as an A \flat , as an upwardly resolving G \sharp after all. To borrow again from Cohn, this reciprocal semitone resolution ‘projects an unstable force field that pulls simultaneously in both directions’.³¹ Two harmonic centres are thus set up by the opening theme as goals. While middleground voice-leading structures can be found to support an overall reading in C major, these are often undermined by the foreground details uncovered by close reading, which strongly imply A minor.

In and of itself, an ambiguity of tonal focus between a tonic and its relative is nothing unusual. As detailed already in Chapter 2, Section 2.3, Peter H. Smith has theorised extensively the technique of ‘pairing’ closely related diatonic harmonies in such a way that it becomes difficult to divine which of them is structural and which is decorative. What makes the *Piacevole* a special case, however, is the apparent ubiquity of such pairing at all structural levels. Writing on Schumann’s and Brahms’s chamber music, Smith notes that ‘pairings inevitably fall within a larger monotonal context, and even [...] temporary functional ambiguities [...] are the exception rather than the rule. Local interactions between emphasised harmonies will tend to fall within locally monotonal frameworks’.³² In the *Piacevole*, by contrast, no harmony seems to be crowned as a structural tonic; the numerous repetitions and variations of its opening theme throughout the movement serve not to alleviate tonal ambiguity but rather to intensify it. Indeed, it becomes difficult to demonstrate that the movement is in a single key at all.

In its first repetition (see Figure 3.8), the middleground initial-order descent is made even weaker by the expanded gap between $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{1}$. Hints at E minor from the theme’s first presentation are now made manifest (see the cadence at 19:14). At 20:2, the dominant of e metamorphoses into a diminished seventh on a, beginning an extended process of submediant tonicisation. Towards the theme’s end, the $\sharp 7/\flat 6$

³¹ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 46.

³² Peter H. Smith, ‘The Drama of Tonal Pairing in Chamber Music of Schumann and Brahms’ in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, eds. Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp. 252–290, at p. 257.

middleground voice leading appears to be contradicted by the foreground, albeit the structural hierarchy has now been inverted, in that C major controls the surface, while A minor is consigned to the middleground. This pattern feels as if it will repeat itself at 22:1, but $V_{9/7}/a$ now functions as a diminished 4/3 chord, resolving to F# minor. Parsed as a modal-mixture *vi Stufe*, this harmony has a straightforward function in A minor, suggesting that this key has now taken over as the commanding tonic, at least for the time being. To rationalise this chord in a C major context, it would have to resolve to G (V), or to partake in a minor-third cycle rooted on C. It does neither of these things.

The figure shows a musical score with two staves (treble and bass clef) and a middleground graph above. The graph includes fingerings (5, 4, 3, a=, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) and a sequence of numbers (6, 6, 6, 6, #6). Below the staff, there are chord symbols: E_b^4 , D^4 , [RP], B^4 . The harmonic analysis below the staff is as follows:

$a=$	$ii_{\flat}^{\#6}$	V	III_{\flat}^6	$vii_{\flat}^{\#4}$	i_{\flat}^6	$V_{7/V}$	$V_{\flat 9}$	III_{\flat}^6	$vii_{\flat}^{\#4}$	$\#vi_{\flat}^6$			
$C=$	I	iii	I^{\flat}	ii	$vii_{\flat}^{\#6}$	$vii^{\#7}/E$	I_{\flat}^6	vi_{\flat}^6	$V_{3/V}$	$VII_{\flat 3}$	$vii^{\#7}/E$	I_{\flat}^6	$\#iv_{\flat}^6?$

Figure 3.9: middleground graph, 20:18–22:4

Harmonic arrival on C major's dominant at 25:1 is implied by the supertonic half-diminished chord, loaded with subdominant function, in the previous bar (see Example 3.3). It appears that some sort of large-scale tonic-dominant polarity might at last be established through tonicisation. However, because the dominant *Stufe* belongs to a syntax that is centred by a single tonic, it would undermine the ambiguity Elgar had been carefully building throughout the movement if it were to be used. While the expected resolution to G is provided in the bass, the alto voice is not so accommodating: its semitonal displacement from D_{\flat} produces an augmented triad, instead of the desired major consonance. This dissonant formation graduates into a C major 6/A minor 7 chord over the next two beats, yielding what Christopher Lewis would describe as 'a tonic sonority created by conflation of the [Piacevole's] two tonic

triads'.³³ Elgar thus hints at a generic tonicisation of a structural dominant, but opts instead to produce a chordal dissonance that better reflects the compositional logic of the movement in question, which pairs C major and A minor pervasively.

25

Example 3.3: rehearsal figures 24:14–25:2

The opening theme returns at 35:1 for the coda. It sounds much as before, albeit a bar of material has now been deleted.³⁴ Most interesting are its final eight bars (see Figure 3.10), in which the opening theme is drastically altered in a last-ditch attempt to effect unambiguous closure.

Figure 3.10: voice-leading reduction 37:1–7

³³ Christopher O. Lewis, *Tonal Coherence in Mahler's Ninth Symphony* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), p. 6.

³⁴ Brian Newbould, "Never Done Before": Elgar's Other Enigma', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (May, 1996): 228–241, at 236.

The opening C major arpeggiation is decorated with a chromatic neighbour-note, which heralds a prolongation of the minor subdominant (37:2). Responsible for causing analytical uncertainty throughout the movement, this note is now marked definitively as A \flat , not G \sharp . An F minor tonicisation is suggested by the C7 at 37:4, but the resolution to this local tonic is clouded by the addition of a minor 6th, resulting in a concord of voices which might also be parsed as a half-diminished supertonic in C. This harmony had become something of a cadential cliché in music of the late Romantic period, having a strong subdominant function; it would be anachronistically classical to suggest that such a chord is too weak to effect tonal closure, especially given the implied resolution from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{1}$ in an inner voice (37:4 to 5). It resolves not to C major, however, but to an ambiguous dyad of E and G. This could stand either for C major or v/a: representatives of the two tonalities, which have been blended consistently throughout the *Piacevole*. A bass C enters a bar later, but the music has now been stretched out too much for this to sound cadential. $\hat{5}$ refuses to fall to $\hat{1}$ in the first violin and the *Kopfton* remains static. Closure is avoided and, given the pervasiveness of tonal pairing throughout, it is hard to assert (at least, in a technical sense) that the movement is in a single key at all. However, this passage has still been *heard* to effect a satisfactory close: Colton maintains that ‘the affirmation of C major at the very end is certainly a welcome respite from the tonal wanderings of the movement as a whole’, for example.³⁵ Imagining this ending from a player’s point of view helps to clarify this effect. Working on their parts individually, the members of a hypothetical quartet might anticipate that the movement’s ambiguities would be satisfactorily resolved at its close. The expectation is that another player must be supplying the crucial tonic note or harmonisation to align with that player’s own cadential topic (see Figure 3.11: notes in brackets denote an imaginary harmonic context).

³⁵ Colton, ‘Edward Elgar’s Late Style’, p. 54.

Violin 1	Viola	Cello
G descant - probably cover tone (37:5-6)	Falling fifths implying ii - V - I (37:4-6)	7-3 (37:4-5)

V⁷ I ii⁶ V⁷ I V⁷ I

Figure 3.11: imagined resolutions (in brackets), 37:4–6

In the first violin part there is a sustained high G (37:5 to 6), which one might expect to be a descant note, covering the real melodic motion from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{1}$ in a lower part. The falling fifths in the viola (37:4 to 6) imply the progression ii–V–I as a harmonic context, while the semitonal movement F to E indicated in the treble clef of the cello part implies the resolution of the dominant’s seventh to the third of the tonic (37:4 to 5). These expectations might be strong enough to convince individual players (and listeners, if they are following a particular line) that the piece has satisfactorily closed, even if the combined contents of the written score suggest a different interpretation of events. The movement begins and ends with the same chord: something which is often synonymous with the idea of monotonicity. From a technical standpoint, however, such token features cannot be made to stand in for a full closure of the *Ursatz* in the manner of a synecdoche. The movement’s background is split between two keys and there are no structural cadences to confirm either as a global tonic. Monotonicity survives as a ghost, which can still exert a powerful influence on the listener while only being rhetorically (as opposed to structurally) present.

Unfortunately, the ostensible ordinariness of the *Piacevole* can sometimes lead critics to pass over its subtleties without much thought: Robin Stowell characterises

the movement as ‘light music’,³⁶ for example, while Diana McVeagh finds it ‘undemanding’.³⁷ As demonstrated by the second interpretation of the ‘Bogey’ sketch featured at the beginning of this chapter, however, it is those things which we take for granted that can ultimately most surprise us. Much as Burne-Jones’s ghost is mistakenly folded up and placed in a drawer, Elgar’s *Piacevole* can be catalogued as a late addition to a body of monotonal, nineteenth-century chamber works, considered to be relatively conservative in comparison with the operatic and symphonic innovations of the time, on account of its ‘Brahmsian’ and ‘retrospective’ tenor.³⁸ Just as the girl discovers that her laundry harbours a ghostly imposter, however, the analyst realises on closer inspection that the *Piacevole*’s implied monotonicity is both a perceived presence and a structural absence. It is impossible to resolve this paradox, in much the same way that one cannot decide if the drawer in the ‘Bogey’ sketch is really *just* a drawer, or whether it might have a double function as a coffin from which a spirit emerges; or if the child and the ghost are intended as polar opposites or whether – because of the ghost’s lying in a foetal position in a makeshift cradle – they are united by an uncanny youthfulness. It is this seemingly irreducible tension that gives both the *Piacevole* and the Burne-Jones sketch their modern character.

In Brian Trowell’s words, despite the *Piacevole*’s ‘complete Brahmsian understanding of classical tonality’, it can also be said to exploit ‘the gravitational relativity between key-areas in a new and unexpected way’, which foreshadows similar procedures in some of Igor Stravinsky’s later neoclassical works, such as his *Symphony in C*.³⁹ This comparison touches on an important historical point, best articulated by Daniel Grimley: namely, that ‘the striking diatonicism of the Quartet’s second movement can [...] be heard as a deliberate attempt to define a new musical language that steers away from post-Romantic chromaticism rather than merely an

³⁶ Robin Stowell (ed.), ‘Traditional and progressive nineteenth-century trends: France, Italy, Great Britain and America’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 250–265, at p. 262.

³⁷ McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker*, p. 177. In a talk titled ‘Notes about the Quartet and the Violin Sonata’, given at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, on 7 October 2018, however, McVeagh changed her view. She now regarded the *Piacevole* as being ‘conservative with a twist’: that is, both new and old at the same time.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁹ Brian Trowell, ‘The Road to Brinkwells: the late chamber music’ in *Oh, My Horses: Elgar and the Great War*, ed. Lewis Foreman (Worcester: Elgar Work, 2013), pp. 347–387, at p. 275; 273.

anachronistic or reactionary return to an outmoded tonal syntax'.⁴⁰ Indeed, as argued in this chapter, the superficially traditional language of the *Piacevole* presents the analyst with more of a challenge than the chromatic 'modernisms' of *Gerontius*. While the oratorio's syntax allows one to reduce various harmonic novelties to familiar diatonic frameworks, the Quartet's middle movement genuinely challenges conventional analytical vocabularies. One is forced to talk about both diatonicism without a tonal centre and about nontonicity which maintains the use of consonant triads and traditional forms of counterpoint. In consequence, the *Piacevole* is liminal in a way that *Gerontius*'s second-act prelude is not. It goes beyond tonality, while appearing not to; it brings listeners into communion with a ghost.

⁴⁰ Daniel M. Grimley, 'The chamber music and works for strings' in *The Cambridge Companion to Edward Elgar*, eds. Daniel Grimley & Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 120–138, at p. 133.

Chapter 4:

The Piano Quintet as a Philosophy of History

Elgar's Piano Quintet, Op. 84 exhibits a number of different attitudes to developments of musical language in the early twentieth century. Broadly speaking, its opening Allegro–Moderato and Adagio movements might be interpreted as attempting to integrate modern forms of timbre or pitch organisation into their otherwise distinctly nineteenth-century use of language and form; or (less positively), to show how an attempt to recreate exactly the principles of nineteenth-century monotonality cannot escape being contaminated by anachronistic or stylistically inappropriate devices (see Sections 4.1 and 4.2). The third movement Andante–Allegro, by contrast, seeks to bracket out such developments entirely: it presents the Austro-Germanic tonal idiom as if it were a universal (and thus timeless) aesthetic standard, without need of supplementation (see Section 4.3). Taken as a whole, the Piano Quintet might be thought of as a discourse on the state of tonal composition in post-war twentieth-century Britain.

In the first half of the Allegro–Moderato's opening paragenetic space,¹ time is spatialised: musical features associated with different periods of music history (namely, a classical cadential archetype, anachronistically decorated second-species counterpoint, and modernist instrumentation) are presented as a series of overlaid, geological strata. One might be tempted to characterise the resultant affect as 'postmodernist', insofar as history, represented here by different kinds of musical materials, which act almost like emblems for particular compositional periods, seems to float free of chronology. As Fredric Jameson notes, postmodernism produces

a culture increasingly dominated by space and spatial logic. If, indeed, the subject has lost its capacity actively to extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions across the temporal manifold and to organize its past and future into coherent

¹ James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy define paragenetic space as 'everything else in the movement that may set up, momentarily step outside of, or otherwise alter or frame the presentation of a sonata form': see their *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 282. The paragenetic space in question might be defined more exactly as an introduction-coda frame: *ibid.*, p. 305.

experience, it becomes difficult enough to see how the cultural productions of such a subject could result in anything but ‘heaps of fragments’ and in a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory.²

It should be noted, however, that the effect of the first movement’s introduction is disquieting rather than euphoric. This distinguishes it from postmodernism proper, in which ‘such features [of sharp juxtaposition] become themselves the norm’ and thus ‘shed all such forms of negative affect and become available for other, more decorative uses’.³ Furthermore, such a designation would be profoundly anachronistic: postmodernism was born at a particular moment in history, in response to particular economic conditions,⁴ and while aspects of it might have been emergent in the earlier modernist period, they were not dominant;⁵ to find postmodern traits in pre-postmodern music is to run the risk of projecting contemporary aesthetic standards back on to a time period to which they would have been alien. I will ultimately read Elgar’s synchronic layering of music history against the war-time and immediately post-war modernisms of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, which I claim provide a more fruitful historical frame of reference.

In the second half of this opening paragenetic space, the angular, stuttering, and almost mechanistic writing of the preceding bars is abandoned for an exaggerated miming of romanticism through the use of chromatic seventh chords, plagal shadings, and smooth voice leading. The main sonata-form body of the movement that comes afterwards, by contrast, seems to be cast in an almost Beethovenian mould: it is one of only two movements among the late chamber music to compose out an orthodox *Ursatz*. However, the relatively modern sensibility of the movement’s paragenetic spaces colour our interpretation of the interior sonata;⁶ music in early-to-mid

² Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 24.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴ David Harvey cites the failure of the 1968 student revolutions and the collapse of Fordism: see *The Conditions of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 171.

⁵ The terms ‘dominant’ and ‘emergent’ are borrowed from Raymond Williams’ *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 121–127.

⁶ As Hepokoski and Darcy put it, ‘whenever we find an introduction-coda frame the interior sonata seems subordinated to the outward container. The introduction and coda represent the higher reality, under whose more immediate mode of existence—or under whose embracing auspices—the sonata form proper is laid out as a contingent process, a demonstration of an artifice that unfolds only under

nineteenth-century style cannot be heard outside of a twentieth-century listening context, which will necessarily modify our listening experience. In the conclusion to Section 4.1, I argue that the linearity of the movement's sonata form is potentially isomorphic with a traditionally liberal attitude to history (i.e. history is progress and proceeds both logically and gradually, rather than spasmodically⁷), which it became difficult to maintain in the face both of the First World War and the modernist philosophies of history that the war served to catalyse.⁸ The paragenetic frame which bookends it, by contrast, might be thought to instantiate a Poundian, war-inspired view of history, which relies on juxtapositions without a concomitant feeling of progress or necessary direction.⁹ I consider the conflict between these two implied views of history to be the animating force of this movement.

In the Adagio, history is imagined diachronically, but to similarly disorientating effect. The primary theme of the exposition begins in one style, associated with that of late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century Germany; it is then developed in an unidiomatic way (particularly in its handling of cadences), which is suggestive more of an early-romantic reworking of classical form-functional principles in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Elgar's secondary theme is scaffolded by an intrathematic chromatic-third cycle, which shifts our historical frame of reference forward to the mid nineteenth century; and the development ends with an example of modal writing reminiscent of that pursued by the likes of Lalo, Sarasate, Debussy, and Ravel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Around one hundred and twenty years of music history, played out in different parts of Europe, is thus compressed into one hundred and twenty bars of music, as Elgar organises his musical materials chronologically so as to match the unfolding in time of his own musical argument.¹⁰

the authority of the prior existence of the frame': *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 305.

⁷ The classic critique of liberal historiography is Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931).

⁸ On this last point, see Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁹ See Samuel Hynes, 'Pound and the Prose Tradition' in *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 129–143.

¹⁰ There is precedent for writing the history of music in a single piece outside of the canonic repertory. Louis Spohr's Symphony No. 6 in G major, for example, uses each of its four movements as a kind of historical character sketch. The first invokes the style of Bach and Handel, the second, of Haydn and Mozart, and the third, of Beethoven. Each is meant as a display of reverence to a past musical master. The Finale, by contrast, mocks the music of Spohr's own time (1839–40), so as to stress its erroneous departure from the divine principles set out in earlier music: see Clive Brown, *Louis Spohr: A Critical*

The Adagio's fast-forward through history implies a narrative of progress. Crucially, musical representations of the past are not to be left intact by such a journey towards the near-present; they are themselves modified by time's passing.

While the ways in which history is imagined in the Quintet's first and second movements differ, the resultant meanings produced by their different conceptual approaches effectively overlap. In both, Elgar 'adopted an essentially Germanic musical syntax as one of [his] starting points',¹¹ thus drawing comparison with the technique of earlier composers, namely Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms. However, numerous anachronisms creep in, which fight with these older materials for recognition. While such a conflict is subtle, analysis brings it into sharp relief; far from expunging history, close reading makes us acutely aware of its presence.

The Quintet's finale, by contrast, exhibits a third attitude to history which is altogether more conservative. Musical materials associated with a time nearer to that of Elgar's own present are expunged and the movement articulates a relatively straightforward mid-nineteenth-century design. After acknowledging the conflicting voices of his own 1919 present, Elgar opts, in the end, to repress them. Considered as a whole, the Quintet plays out a drama which characterises the condition of the mature chamber music more generally. This might be thought to take the form of an aesthetic dilemma: namely, why go about writing music in a broadly nineteenth-century style in the early twentieth century? Should the present be exorcised altogether, or may contemporary ideas be allowed to creep in, so as to create a new hybrid style? The finale might represent Elgar's final word on the matter in favour of the former view, but it cannot nullify completely the dark sayings of the first and second movements, which appear to endorse the latter.

Biography (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) pp. 244–245. However, Elgar's handling of musical history is crucially different from Spohr's. Rather than presenting the past as an ideal, which has been wrongly abandoned, Elgar seems to stress (at least in this movement) that the musical past cannot be properly got at in the first place; it is always already mediated by the present.

¹¹ Daniel M. Grimley, "A smiling with a sigh": the chamber music and works for strings' in *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, eds. Julian Rushton & Daniel M. Grimley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 120–138 at p. 129.

Section 4.1: Moderato–Allegro

The Moderato-Allegro of Elgar's Piano Quintet has attracted more critical attention than any other chamber movement. Andrew Colton argues that, as much as anything else, its popularity is inspired by the extra-musical connotations with which it has been invested.¹² To take the most famous example, Elgar described its opening bars as being 'ghostly stuff' in a letter to Ernest Newman.¹³ But to what specific musical content does such a comment refer? Is there indeed 'intriguing evidence of its verity in the music', as Colton has claimed (albeit without providing any supporting analytical evidence himself)?¹⁴ In the afterword to one of her novels, Helen Dunmore provides a formalisation of the conditions that lead to haunting; the passage in question can be adapted to help interpret the ghostly as manifested in this particular musical context:

I have always loved ghost stories, and especially those [...] which deal with the imprint that the past leaves upon the present. Some events are so overwhelming that time, rather than carrying them away, brings them back again and again to the same place. In fact time itself is transformed. It flexes backwards and forwards until cracks appear in it, and where these cracks form is where haunting begins.¹⁵

In the following analysis, I argue that a listener's attention might be thought to flex backwards and forwards between surface and middleground hearings. In each case, the musical details in question are structured or stylised so as to signify different compositional periods. The introduction's surface suggests a modernist sound world, characterised by austere instrumentation and anachronistically chromatic decoration of first species counterpoint, while the middleground evokes the legacy of a classical, cadential past to which the music is attempting to return. It is sometimes difficult to reconcile these two hearings with one another, and the cracks and slippages between

¹² Andrew Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style' (Ph.D. dissertation, The John Hopkins University, 1995), pp. 81–82.

¹³ Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 321.

¹⁴ Colton, 'Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style', p. 82. Michael Allis's 'Elgar, Lytton, and the Piano Quintet, Op. 84', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (May, 2004): 198–238, looks to describe the work in terms of various scenes from Edward-Bulwer Lytton's supernatural novel, *A Strange Story*; but he does not touch on how the figure of the ghost might be represented in music.

¹⁵ Helen Dunmore, 'Afterword' in *The Greatcoat* (London: Hammer, 2012), p. 241.

them can be said to exemplify musical haunting: the classical past attempts to assert itself in a modern present to which it no longer fully belongs, and yet in which it still subsists as an overwhelming memory that can never be totally escaped.

Figure 4.1 shows that the passage is essentially periodic in structure. The antecedent begins by prolonging the iv of a middleground auxiliary half cadence as part of a descending G minor arpeggiation; the root of the latter chord stands at the head of a descending third progression terminating on V between 0:3 and 9 (G–F–E). $\hat{8}$, the principal melody note, moves into an inner voice as part of an implied and chromatically inflected third progression from 0:1 to 5 (A–B \flat –B \natural –C), while a fourth progression from D to G \sharp in the soprano prolongs the dominant (0:3 to 9). The consequent's PAC is produced by an $\hat{8}$ – $\sharp\hat{7}$ – $\hat{8}$ neighbour-note progression in the upper voice, counterpointed with a $i^{6/3}$ – $ii^{6/4}$ –V–i motion in the bass.

Figure 4.1: Elgar, Piano Quintet, Op. 83, 1st movement, voice-leading reduction, 0:1–17

At this level of voice-leading abstraction, it would appear that the opening theme is surprisingly classical. However, at the level of the surface, Elgar's two-part counterpoint sounds almost Fuxian and pre-harmonic; both voices carry distinct melodic interest, as opposed to one serving simply as an accompaniment for the other. Furthermore, the lowest line, intoned by the string quartet, is decorated with stuttering semiquaver repetitions and chromatic neighbour- or passing notes. The resultant, unusually modern effect is compounded by the austerity of Elgar's chosen instrumental timbre. Both voices are reinforced by extensive octave and unison

doubling (see Example 4.1), which results in a bare and gelid sound world totally at odds with the kinds of timbre implied by the classical voice-leading template laid out in Figure 4.1, or Fuxian principles concerning parallels in two-voice counterpoint. The registral crossover between the two instrumental groups only intensifies the feeling of two independently moving voices; it appears to repudiate completely the melody–accompaniment style which characterises classicism. Two aesthetics are thus blended, one old and one new; their relationship is ambiguous and uneasy.¹⁶

Moderato ♩ = 76

Moderato ♩ = 76

Example 4.1: rehearsal figures 0:1–11

¹⁶ It is for exactly this reason that the 2016 orchestration of the Piano Quintet by Donald Fraser is, to my mind, fundamentally misguided. Fraser contends that the whole Quintet is ‘a kind of diary of the past’, which cries out for an orchestra. Nothing could be further from the case. There are indeed moments when Fraser’s orchestration sounds astoundingly like pre-war Elgar, but this introduction is something of an altogether different kind. Its timbral austerity belongs to the twentieth century: rendering it with a romantic orchestra dramatically reduces this effect. Fraser’s blog post about this orchestration project can be read here: see ‘Orchestrating Elgar’, *Gramophone*, blog, entry posted 13 May 2016 <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/blog/gramophone-guest-blog/orchestrating-elgar> (accessed 2 June 2019).

Daniel Grimley has observed that ‘the texture of the introduction sounds as though it were written against the ensemble rather than trying to bring them together’; it is a form of ‘structural dissonance’, which is fully resolved only by the homophonic unity of the secondary-theme group.¹⁷ Some, however, have heard this tension between instrumental forces as a mark of incompetence: strings should sing and pianos should provide a more overtly rhythmic form of accompaniment, not the other way around. Thomas F. Dunhill’s comments on the Quintet’s opening serve to exemplify this view:

The opening of the first movement is, in itself, a clear example of quite earnest ineffectiveness. The sustained theme is, in its presentation here, by no means sustained in effect. The broken phrases given to the strings could have been played adequately on the piano, whilst the strings might have ‘sung’ the piano melody with true expressiveness.¹⁸

Actually, Elgar plays on the tension between sung expression and its obverse in the episode sandwiched between the end of the exposition and the beginning of the development: see 7:13 to 10:1. (NB: An episode is a thematic unit unrelated to the argument of a sonata’s exposition; it might be derived from an introduction, which is cyclically repeated, or it might be entirely new.) At rehearsal figure 8, the introductory period is reproduced *verbatim*, albeit it is now transposed up a whole tone as part of the middleground prolongation of a ii *Stufe* in A minor, which functions as a predominant for the perfect cadence between 10:4 and 5 at the beginning of the development section. The hard won reunification of the instrumental texture that characterises the secondary theme group, in which melody and accompaniment have clear and mutually supporting roles, seems to fragment once more; the traditional world of the sonata appears to be haunted by this disquietingly modern and ‘exterior’ theme, which disrupts and challenges its trajectory. At rehearsal figure 9, however, a transmogrification of its texture is effected (see Example 4.2). The episode’s upper part is now played by the strings, while the pianist articulates the lower, which now consists of *legatissimo* arpeggiations and sustained pedalling, rather than stuttering,

¹⁷ Grimley, ‘The chamber music and works for strings’, p. 134.

¹⁸ Thomas F. Dunhill, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London and Glasgow, 1938), pp. 179–180.

staccato semiquaver articulation and chromatic neighbour-note inflections. Unlike at the beginning of the movement, the instruments seem to take on more traditional roles in the texture; what was once eerie and modern has become legible as part of a straightforwardly romantic sound world.

Example 4.2: rehearsal figures 9:1–5

Rather than being greeted as the moment in which Elgar suddenly remembers how to compose properly, this juxtaposition between styles can be heard to foreground the animating impulse of the movement's form: namely, the contrast between old and new; or romantic and modern. Surely the point of the opening music of the introduction (contra Dunhill) is that it *is not* meant to be sung: it is to be played in an almost expressionless, automated fashion. The two-part counterpoint might imply voices, but the negation of such an expectation by a more mechanistic sonority (see the stuttering repetitions in bars 3 and 4 of Example 4.1, for example) seems poignant for a work completed ten years after the publication of the *Manifesto of Futurism*. Indeed, when this theme does re-emerge in sung form at rehearsal figure 9, it sounds false somehow, on account of its uncanny resemblance to its forebear. The notion of what is idiomatic or 'correct' for an instrument to play seems to have been altered through the course of the movement's narrative.

The second half of the introduction effects a drastic change in harmony and texture, which prepares the listener for the more traditional sonata form that is to follow. It is ostensibly romantic, luscious and lyrical and thus sits uncomfortably

alongside the mechanistic instrumentation that preceded it. Two-voice counterpoint is abandoned for full-sounding seventh chords with easily discernible tonal functions (see Figure 4.2). To which compositional period does this work belong? The first A minor chord after the cadence is heard, in prospect, as having tonic function, but it soon becomes apparent that it is an appoggiatura, which falls to another dissonance before finally settling on an inverted German sixth at 1:2. This progression is reiterated so as to resolve the B \flat 7 at 1:2 to the A7 chord at 1:4, as part of a tonicisation of D minor. While this D seems at first to be a local tonic, it ultimately functions as a plagally charged minor subdominant in A major: see the resolution at 1:8. Indeed, the minor neighbour-note chord of 1:1 can be considered to have transformed into a major-mode tonic by the end of the eight-bar unit.

Figure 4.2: voice-leading reduction, 1:1–8

The introduction is repeated between 24:1 and 26:13 at the movement's end, albeit its thematic order is reversed, with the romantic seventh-chord passage preceding the quasi-modernist embellished counterpoint. Ironically, the sonata-form Allegro, which the Moderato frames, is highly conservative at the level of deep middleground structure; it composes out a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent, counterpointed with I–V–I in the bass (see Figure 4.3).

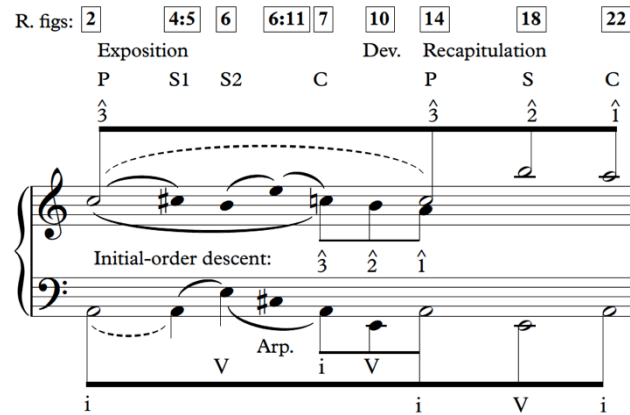


Figure 4.3: background graph, 2–22

Few metaphors for musical tradition are more potent than a completed *Ursatz*. Despite such apparent simplicity, however, the Allegro does exhibit a number of anachronisms. These are probably the result of Elgar’s playing with traditional sonata-form expectations in an attempt to prevent the music from becoming too predictable; they are not necessarily hermeneutically interesting in and of themselves.

The Allegro develops a formal process first used in Elgar’s *The Music Makers* (1912), which Aidan Thomson has termed ‘sonata reversal’.¹⁹ The function of a sonata-form beginning is often to instigate a tonal ‘problem’, which the remainder of the movement will be tasked with resolving. This problem might be instantiated by an individual note at an intra-thematic level (as in the C# of the opening movement of Beethoven’s *Eroica* symphony, for example), or by the tonal polarity manifested at an inter-thematic level (as exhibited by the key relationships established by a sonata’s primary and secondary themes). Rather than the coiled spring of the music’s exposition driving us towards a condition of relieved equilibrium in the recapitulation, the Allegro’s opening half is characterised by a state of near complete repose and tonic monomania. Increases of tension in the recapitulation then lead to the formation of subtle tears on the movement’s tonal surface, as the sonata sighs under the unexpected strain. More specifically, modern-sounding chromaticism is introduced by the interpolation of a new thematic episode, as a means of facilitating the establishment of tonic–dominant polarity in the middleground.

The primary theme evinces a diatonic simplicity that is uncharacteristic of

¹⁹ Aidan J. Thomson, ‘Unmaking *The Music Makers*’ in *Elgar Studies*, eds. J. P. E. Harper-Scott & Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 99–134, at p. 132.

Elgar's mature chamber music. Formally, it articulates a small ternary theme, structured as a period in which antecedent and consequent are separated by an extended interpolation. The opening voice exchange of the antecedent takes the *Kopfton* $\hat{3}$ from the alto and places it on top of an F major pre-dominant, which falls to $\hat{2}$ in the next bar; the bass rises an ascending sixth as part of a motion into an inner voice, which is counterpointed with B as the root of ii^{o7} (see Figure 4.4). As part of what initially seems to be a fill between antecedent and consequent, a rising fourth progression in the bass effects a return to the tonic between 2:6 and 7 (E–A), in preparation for the period's second half, while the upper voice traces a descending A minor arpeggiation, prepared by a neighbour-note G#. Instead of the consequent, however, we are presented with an extended interpolation which traverses a third progression (i.e. A–B–C) in the bass through a cycle of fifths (see Figure 4.5). The resultant $C\sharp$ is part of an F major arpeggiation, which resolves back to the tonic through implied $\hat{6}$ – $\hat{5}$ voice leading. Despite its rhythmic displacement, the consequent articulates a normative PAC (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.4: voice-leading reduction, 2:1–7

Figure 4.5: voice-leading reduction, 2:7–15

Figure 4.6: voice-leading reduction, 2:15–3:1

S1 is more adventurous in its choice of harmonies – it draws on chord substitutions from A Phrygian Dominant and A Phrygian Major – but it fails to establish another key area (see Example 4.3). There is still a strong return to the tonic every other bar, making the passage tonally static.

Example 4.3: rehearsal figures 4:5–5:1

While the beginning of S2 is elided with a tonicisation of V at 6:1, it is quickly revealed to function as part of a descending arpeggiation of the tonic at a deeper structural level (see Figure 4.7). As Andrew Colton puts it, ‘the assertion of the tonic key is almost belligerent in its insistence. [...] Where the Sonata and Quartet featured many passages where the sense of tonal centre was purposefully skirted, here the blatant cadences create their own unique tension’.²⁰ The exposition displays a tonic-orientated obsession, which one would usually associate with the idealised recapitulation of a compositional treatise.

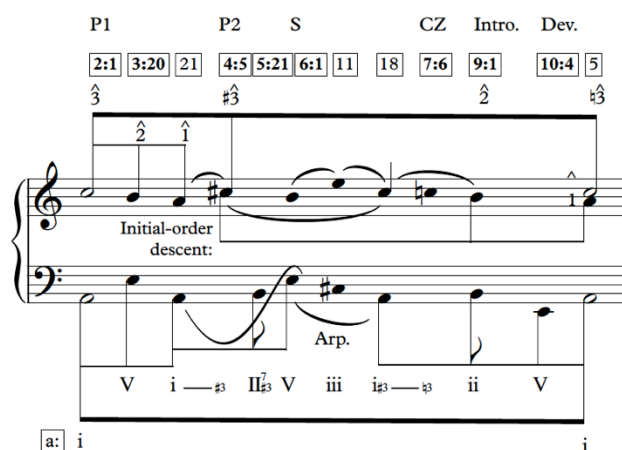


Figure 4.7: middleground graph, 2:1–10:5

In the recapitulation, however, where one would typically expect the work’s tonal ‘problems’ to be resolved, clear-cut tonic–dominant polarity is instantiated for the first time in the middleground (see 17:1 to 21:1 in Figure 4.8).

²⁰ Colton, ‘Characteristics of Elgar’s Late Music’, p. 86.

Figure 4.8: middleground graph, 14:1–end

This is brought about by an episode which interposes itself into the narrative at 16:6; its complex chromaticism serves as a characteristic foil for the exposition’s diatonicism. It is principally composed of a repeated middleground root progression between A and B in the bass (see Figure 4.9). It is first harmonised as a superstrong upshift from *i* to *ii*₅ in A minor between 16:15 and 19, and then as a pre-dominant to dominant progression in E major between 17:4 and 9. Viewed abstractly, these progressions are functional, but in reality they are decorated by complex forms of chromatic writing.

At 16:15 and 19, respectively, A minor and B minor are modified by slide operations, which maintain the thirds of the given chords in common while moving their two outer voices down by a semitone (i.e. A **C** E → A_♭ **C** E_♭ and B **D** F_♯ → B_♭ **D** F_♯).²¹ These harmonies are separated out from one another by a sequence composed of alternating-fifth and augmented-sixth-like semitone motions in the bass. Michael Allis observes that this ‘striking series of perfect cadences in a variety of keys undermines the tonality of the passage’.²² This is undoubtedly *part* of its aural effect, but the individuality of the slide operation aurally spotlights the harmonic roots of A and B in a manner reminiscent of more orthodox *Stufen* prolongation.

At 17:1, the upper and bass voices expand outwards in contrary motion,

²¹ David Lewin is responsible for naming this voice-leading operation. See *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 178.

²² Allis, ‘Elgar, Lytton, and the Piano Quintet, Op. 84’, 230.

moving from an upper sharp mediant (i.e. C# major in A major and E \flat major in B major) to an augmented sixth, which either resolves to a bare octave as the root of a diatonic *Stufe* (as at 17:9) or is itself left to substitute for the consonance in question (as at 17:4).²³ The passage adheres to a broadly diatonic framework, despite the extreme chromaticism of its connective tissue.

Figure 4.9: voice-leading reduction, 16:15–18:1

A highly chromaticised liquidation of S is then used to effect a final V–i cadence between 21:13 and 22:2, which is elided with the onset of the recapitulation’s closing zone (see Figure 4.10). In it, Elgar composes out an active dominant by means of two linear progressions. Despite the fact that they share the same points of harmonic arrival and departure, the upper and lower voices run through furrows cut by different scales. The lower voice’s minor sixth is filled in by notes derived from A harmonic minor, but the upper voice traverses an octatonic scale rooted on E (i.e. $\hat{5}/a$). The ‘harmonies’ produced by the confluence of these independent voices are listed in the graph, but they are purely incidental: that is to say, they are the epiphenomenal product of voices moving against one another, each of which obeys its own distinct scale-degree logic. The absorption of these harmonic excrescences into clearly discernible linear strands might be said to ameliorate their chromatic effect.

²³ In an analysis of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 22, Op. 54, Riemann labels the arrival on an A \flat 7 chord in bar 36 as a local tonic despite the fact that it shares not a single note in common with the actual local tonic: namely, D minor. As Alexander Rehding remarks, for Riemann, ‘because [this seventh] follows the dominant on a phrasal downbeat [...] the chord which actually sounds must therefore fulfill [the necessarily expected tonic] function, regardless of its appearance’: see *Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 76–77. Something similar is in evidence in the Elgar, too: the dissonance can be heard to stand in for a consonance, as opposed to generating an expectation of actual resolution.

S Chromaticized liquidation CZ

21:1	13	14	17	18	22:1	2
	ST	T	ST	T	ST	

a: V Ger $\frac{6}{3}$ i

Figure 4.10: voice-leading reduction, 21:1–22:2

The inclusion of these chromaticisms in the recapitulation do not make for a radical composition, as they are still distinctly nineteenth-century in character. More important than any of these nuances, however, is the juxtaposition of the interior sonata form with the parageneric spaces which frame it. As a result of this dialogic relationship, the apparent conservatism of the sonata-form Allegro may be characterised not as a lapse in inspiration, but as a deliberate narrative foil for the modernity of the framing sections.²⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy have written that, in nineteenth-century music,

whenever we find an introduction-coda frame the interior sonata seems subordinated to the outward container. The introduction and coda represent the higher reality, under whose more immediate mode of existence—or under whose embracing auspices—the sonata form proper is laid out as a contingent process, a demonstration of an artifice that unfolds only under the authority of the prior existence of the frame.²⁵

In this movement, the frame seems to stand for the ambiguous intermixture of

²⁴ The critic of *The Manchester Guardian* criticised the movement for ‘lurching erratically from the inspired to the trivial’: see Author unknown, ‘Elgar’s Chamber Music: A Manchester Concert’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 May, 1957, p. 7. It is my contention that Elgar’s handling of this duality is, on the contrary, controlled and meaningful.

²⁵ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 305.

historicist and modernist aesthetics which was coming to define Elgar's post-war present. By placing a sonata form inside it, which functions as a synecdoche for tradition (whatever its *sui generis* qualities), the movement seems to argue that the musical past will always already be mediated by the relative modernity of a particular listening context.

Much existing criticism can be argued to misunderstand this point. Dunhill, for example, lambasted the first movement of the Quintet for failing to live up to 'the standard set by Schumann, Brahms, Dvořák, César Franck, Dohnányi (in his second quintet) and others'.²⁶ An easy reply to such a criticism is that Elgar's work was written significantly later: the lexical continuity maintained with pieces of the past, on account of Elgar's retained use of consonant triads, has blinded Dunhill (along with many others who have criticised the movement's formal looseness and its juxtaposition of profundity and banality) to Elgar's modern handling of a complex music-historical narrative.²⁷ Those moments of fragmentation or ironic juxtaposition, suggestive of a twentieth-century attitude, will necessarily appear to contravene well-established principles of organic development if commentators insist on holding them to nineteenth-century standards.

In early-twentieth-century poetry, however, such juxtapositions had acquired a new kind of expressive coherence, which is exemplified by a 1913 pseudo-haiku of Ezra Pound:

IN A STATION OF THE METRO

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.²⁸

As Peter Howarth puts it,

without a main verb, it is unclear exactly in what relation the two statements stand

²⁶ Dunhill, *Sir Edward Elgar*, p. 179. Relf Clark similarly comments that Elgar's Quintet might be seen to be overshadowed by Dvořák's example: see his *Elgar and Keats: and Other Essays* (Oxford: Positif Press, 2017), pp. 27–28.

²⁷ The negative turn in this work's critical reception, after a period of initial success, is documented in full by Allis: see 'Elgar, Lytton, and the Piano Quintet, Op. 84', 199–201.

²⁸ Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound: Selected Poems: 1908–1969*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 53.

to one another. [...] Is the poet remembering, describing or discovering? Are the petals just a metaphor for the way the faces looked, or are they a memory of another wet spring, or the next sight the speaker saw? [...] There is probably a hidden parallel with the return of the spring and the Greek myth of Persephone returning from the underground, so there might well be a sense of visionary satisfaction that Pound is seeing the Greek myths live again in the Paris metro.²⁹

One can describe the ambiguities of the first half of Elgar's introduction in a similar way. Are the different historical allusions he evokes (in the same manner that Pound collocates antiquity and modern Paris) working in tandem, so as to inject an old formal archetype with new life, as Pound did the Haiku, or are they in reality distinct from one another, as in a bricolage of unrelated sentences? Is Elgar *remembering* the music of the past, which now haunts the present, or has he *discovered* some plane of connection in which 'all ages are contemporaneous':³⁰ that is, part of one and the same synchronic musical truth? A proponent of the abstract possibility of this latter view was T. S. Eliot. For him,

the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.³¹

In the first half of the Piano Quintet's introduction, all of music – from Fux's time to Elgar's own – seems to compose out a simultaneous order. This act of historical

²⁹ Peter Howarth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 39.

³⁰ Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance: An Attempt to Define Somewhat the Charm of the Pre-Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1910), p. vi.

³¹ T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and Individual Talent' (1919) in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1928), pp. 47–59, at p. 49.

blending is at once timeless, in the sense that no historical element takes priority over any of the others, but it is also manifestly temporal, in that it unfolds in time. If there is any truth to be found in this vision of history, it is a chaotic, Poundian one. Samuel Hynes describes lucidly the phenomenal ontology that came to underpin Pound's own theories of history, which began their gestation in his earliest Imagist poems and reached fruition in his *Cantos* (1915–62), as follows:

If reality inheres in things in flux, and the best poem is the 'direct treatment of the thing', then figurative language is bad because it is an abstraction from reality, an imposition of intellectualized order upon the actual flux, which only offers us object beside object, event after event. [...] Pound's determination to imitate the flux of experience carried him further toward pure juxtaposition of things.³²

As Hynes remarks, Pound and many of his contemporaries felt that 'sentiment had dominated English verse of the past century, and that it had dulled the tools of poetry with vague emotion, high-minded moralizing, and rhetorical decoration. The role that Pound set for himself was to sharpen poetry's cutting edge'.³³ A sense of frustration with the old ways was widely felt. More specifically, however, Vincent Sherry argues that it was the disintegration of the hegemony of liberal thought during the War, which gave Pound's and Eliot's poetic philosophies and practices their potency.

As Prime Ministers of their respective war-time governments, H. H. Asquith and David Lloyd George were nominally committed to the idea of Reason: actions were meant to follow a course of logical progression, in accordance with a well-constructed argument; violence was to be avoided at all costs. During the course of the war, however, 'the "reason" through which [the Liberal Party's] causes were spoken ceased to mean anything recognizable, as its conduct reached areas of the previously unthinkable, the unimaginably sordid'.³⁴ The war was unprecedentedly violent and many did not understand or accept the reasons given for Britain's involvement. Furthermore, it became difficult for the public to discern the truth about contemporary affairs, as the reports of both the Liberal press and the government

³² Hynes, 'Pound and the Prose Tradition', p. 136.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁴ Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism*, p. 9.

‘operated rhetorically, not analytically’, which is to say ‘musically, unarguably’,³⁵ in order to obfuscate heavy defeats and losses of life, or to convince civilians of the barbarity of the enemy so that the war might appear more justifiable. The imposition of conscription in 1916 shattered any final pretence that the now Conservative-dominated coalition government adhered to *laissez-faire* ideals, even despite the retention of a Liberal leader at its helm.

Liberalism’s fall from grace, Sherry claims, proved to be a creative catalyst for many modernist writers. ‘Language was being freed from those old ratios of measured and decorous sense, being discredited in an exercise of increasingly evident falsehood’.³⁶ The literary critic I. A. Richards was to formalise this new possibility in terms of the concept of pseudo-statement, in which propositional logic is emptied of all but acoustic content, like “the shedding of the carapace by a crustacean”.³⁷ For Sherry, this development had major consequences for the early-twentieth-century view of history. As he articulates it, ‘the idea of progressive history seems to lie as a kind of residual myth in the language of nationalism, in the syntax of rational argument, where the linear, consistent and end-driven quality in logical proposition extends to a conception of historical time’.³⁸ The synchronic kind of history in which all ages collide with one another in the cramped space of the present moment, hypothesised by Pound and Eliot, is the consequence of a breakdown in this Liberal view of history. To return to Hynes’s exegesis of Pound’s phenomenal ontology, ‘like the elements of an imagist poem, [historical events] are related to each other, not by the artificial links of logic or of syntax or of metaphor, but simply by contiguity’, which is to say, ‘either one-after-the-other, or side-by-side, or again-and-again’.³⁹

Elgar’s stratified method of depicting musical history in the first half of the *Moderato*, then, is broadly consonant with both Pound’s and Eliot’s philosophies of history. Crucially, though, Elgar’s adoption of this aesthetic is extraordinarily brief: he confines it to an introduction–coda frame; and the PACs which conclude both introduction and coda do much to assuage any residual feelings of temporal disorientation. The interior and by far the larger part of the movement, by contrast,

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

³⁹ Hynes, ‘Pound and the Prose Tradition’, pp. 138; 136.

pursues a sonata-form design: i.e. a perfect example of the ‘*from-to*’ form against which Pound was railing, in which the tonic key passes through a number of argumentative stages with different harmonic interlocutors so as to confirm its own identity and truth.⁴⁰ The sense of contrast which Elgar builds into the Moderato–Allegro, between *sui generis*, modern-sounding introductory materials and a clichéd nineteenth-century interior, is thus rich with historical sediment; it is evocative of the conflict between Liberal and modernist attitudes to history in the early twentieth century. The overall message of the movement seems to be as follows: tradition can no longer be heard outside of a modernist context, which is represented by the movement’s paragenetic spaces; a sonata will never sound quite the same again.

Section 4.2: Adagio

The second movement of Elgar’s Quintet begins in such a way that it appears directly to contradict the effect of the strange two-part counterpoint that opens and closes the first movement. Rather than layering different musical elements in order to create a disorientating intermixture of chronologically disparate styles, its opening theme seems to be a manifestation of undiluted classicism. As W. H. Reed put it,

[The Adagio] abounds in finely shaped and polished phrases, and, with its warmth of expression and inspired moments, *it appears to have grown like some work of nature, without the help of human hands.*⁴¹

Simply put, it is Reed’s impression that the Adagio is organic: every part is necessary in its relation to the whole; its form is (to put it in Hugo Riemann’s terms) ‘congruent with its content’.⁴² Heinrich Schenker’s idealised depiction of the quintessential classical building block (namely, a musical period which composes out a miniature *Ursatz*, featuring an interruption on $\hat{2}$ between its antecedent and consequent phrases) is one of the most powerful graphic representations we have of this idea; and the Adagio’s antecedent phrase, at least, synthesises with it perfectly. Schenker

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 139.

⁴¹ W. H. Reed, ‘Elgar’ in *Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Vol I (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 372–377, my italics, at p. 376.

⁴² Quoted in Rehding, *Hugo Riemann*, p. 110.

elevated this idealised local cadential structure (or at least some variation of it) to the level of a noumenal and timeless ‘truth’, which animated so-called masterworks – of whichever period – at every level of structure: back-, middle- and foreground. Despite Schenker’s claims for its ahistorical value, however, this structure is sometimes seen to be synonymous with the musical form of a single composer, at a particular moment of his development: namely, middle-period Beethoven (and his Fifth Symphony in particular).⁴³ Indeed, it is this composer with whom Bernard Shaw expressly associated Elgar’s Adagio. ‘A fine slow movement is a matter of course with you: nobody else has really done it since Beethoven: at least the others have never been able to take *me* in’.⁴⁴

However, while the Adagio’s antecedent might be thought convincingly to emulate the classical style, the movement becomes increasingly anachronistic in its pitch organisation as its musical argument progresses. It fast-forwards through music-historical time, adopting a number of techniques associated with the later 1820s, mid-1850s, and early 1900s, respectively. Examples of such musical time-travel begin to manifest themselves as early as the consequent phrase, which is extended to a point of great imbalance: its repetition of motifs from the antecedent is more mechanically obsessive than it is organic. While still coherent, the harmonic choices for the secondary theme area (namely, middleground chromatic third relations, which occur not only at the boundary between thematic areas but also at a level interior to the themes themselves) imply a historically later harmonic sensibility.⁴⁵ At the end of the development, Elgar uses a double harmonic scale (B, C, D#, E, F#, G, A#) in both (complete) horizontal and (partial) vertical permutations, as a means of bringing about a return to the tonic. To my knowledge, this is without precedent in Austro-Germanic music of the common-practice period.⁴⁶ The scale can be found, however, in a number of Debussy’s piano pieces – namely, ‘Soirée dans Grenade’ (1903),

⁴³ See Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 89–103.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Robert Anderson, *Edward Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1993), italics in the original, p. 388.

⁴⁵ David Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations in Nineteen-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 18.

⁴⁶ While Mozart was of course to ‘imagine’ an Ottoman sound world in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, among other works, it is doubtful that he could have conceived of a scale with *two* augmented seconds.

‘Sérénade interrompue’ (1909–10), and ‘La Puerta del Vino’ (1912–13)⁴⁷ – suggesting a different historical and geographical (i.e. non-Teutonic) source of inspiration.

The interjection of these increasingly contemporary anachronisms into the Adagio makes possible a number of different hermeneutic interpretations. Like the String Quartet’s *Piacevole* (see the analysis in Chapter 3, Section 3.2), this movement begins by invoking a contrapuntal structure that is utterly Schenkerian in its contour, before working against it in numerous ways. In the *Piacevole*, the spectral presence of classicism in the middleground is undermined from the outset by a musical surface that is altogether more modern. In the Piano Quintet’s second movement, by contrast, the classical past is at first presented in high definition before the aural picture starts to crackle, as other images from different historical channels begin to flicker into view.

In other words, Elgar’s Adagio begins as if the emancipation of the dominant in mid-nineteenth-century Germany or the rediscovery of modality in the French traditions of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had never taken place. However, such an attempt at historical denial is short-lived. While the movement ultimately denies the validity of these newer ideas, they are not entirely negated but are instead put to conservative uses. A double harmonic scale might be composed out, but it is heavily invested with dominant function; and even though chromatic-mediant cycles control stretches of the middleground, they can still be shown to prolong diatonic *Stufen*, rather than to ameliorate a feeling of key-centricity. In other words, Elgar does not fully retreat into an idealised notion of the distant past; later events still percolate to the forefront of his musical imagination, albeit their import is always musically productive (as opposed to disruptive), harmonising with the pre-existing diatonic *Ur*-structure and spicing it with novelty.

If it was the case that other post-war artists looked to restore tradition,⁴⁸ then it might be said that Elgar could not quite follow them, for he was too painfully aware of

⁴⁷ See E. Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (New York: Dover Publications, 2014 [1950]), p. 28.

⁴⁸ For example, after the war, the pre-Raphaelite-turned-modernist landscape painter Paul Nash ‘went back to scenes pastoral, with mystical depictions of the Kent marshes and the South Downs; his return to landscape was typical of English art and, in some ways, English culture as a whole in the 1920s and 1930s’: David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013), p. 178.

the contradictions of the present and of the loss of the pre-war world.⁴⁹ A less charitable interpretation of his idiosyncratic treatment of the past might be that, for him, history was synonymous merely with what he liked, becoming a screen on which to project his fantasies. Different periods blend into one, with even contemporary developments (if they were favourable) being imbricated in his vision of a lost ideal world.

Analysis

Now that the overall trajectory of the movement has been traced, more detailed analysis can begin. Figure 4.11 shows the articulation of what appears to be the first part of a period. A conventional antecedent half-cadence is achieved by means of an arpeggiation in the bass register and a descent from a coupled $\hat{5}$ to an interrupted $\hat{2}$ in the soprano.

The figure shows a musical score for measures 1-7 of Elgar's Piano Quintet, Op. 84, 2nd movement. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a piano part (3-prg) and a soprano part. The piano part has a 3-prg (pedal point) on the G note. The soprano part has a descending line from G5 to D4. The score is annotated with voice-leading (N) and arpeggiation (Arp.) symbols. The chord progressions are labeled as vi, IV₃⁶, IV₃⁶, and V. The measure numbers 1-7 are shown above the staff. The soprano part has a coupled $\hat{5}$ (G5) in measure 1 and an interrupted $\hat{2}$ (D4) in measure 7. The piano part has an arpeggiation in measure 1. The voice-leading is indicated by arrows and 'N' symbols.

Figure 4.11: voice-leading reduction: Elgar, Piano Quintet, Op. 84, 2nd movement, -:1-7

In contrast to the middle movements of the String Quartet and the Violin Sonata, which are characterised by contrapuntal and harmonic ambiguity, such benign writing might strike the listener as being strangely incongruous. As Harper-Scott puts it, in a

⁴⁹ Elgar was to reject Binyon's request for the composer to put his ode 'Peace' to music, for example. 'I do not feel drawn to write peace music somehow . . . The whole atmosphere is too full of complexities for me to feel music to it': letter to Binyon 5 November 1918, cited in Michael Kennedy, *The Life of Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 156.

work ‘that could have had room for more serious musical language, we can wonder what its suppression signifies’.⁵⁰ As the piece develops, however, there will be something of a return of the repressed in the shape of historically later forms of pitch organisation, which creep on to the ledger lines. The present cannot be bracketed out entirely.

As part of the consequent, the dominant is tonicised between 27:3 and 9 (see Figure 4.12). However, the resultant root-position V is not further established as a *Stufe*: it is absorbed into a larger sequential pattern, based on descending third progressions in parallel tenths, which gives the passage the function of a medial continuation, dissipating any sense of imminent closure (see Figure 4.13). The C# minor chord at 28:1 acts as a pivot that brings us back into a locally E-major context.

Figure 4.12: voice-leading reduction, -:8–27:9

Figure 4.13: voice-leading reduction, 27:8–28:1

The ensemble then oscillates somewhat obsessively between iii and vi, as it mulls over the voice-exchange motif from the second half of the antecedent (see Figure 4.14).

⁵⁰ Harper-Scott, *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life*, p. 110.

This is followed by two half cadences, each of which supports a descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{2}$ in the upper voice (28:7 and 9). At this point, it becomes a stretch to suggest that this music represents an expanded consequent: it sounds more like a subtly malfunctioning repeat of the antecedent. Syntactically speaking, medial rather than concluding function is suggested; the repeated half cadences do not drive the music forward but instead sound oddly obsessive.

Figure 4.14: voice-leading reduction, 28:1–29:4

At 29:5, the bass voice finally falls from V to I (see Example 4.4). Elgar has presented us with an eight-bar antecedent and a thirty-one-bar ‘consequent’. Considered holistically, this theme can hardly be thought to model classical balance; its obsessive repetitions are more mechanical than they are organic. Furthermore, it is *only* the bass which resolves cadentially: the upper voice lingers on D \sharp for a single bar, creating a leading-tone diminished-seventh over a tonic pedal. This substitute V sounds post-cadential in this context; it colours the *penultimate* dominant at 29:4 as an *ultimate* dominant (as in a half cadence) and thus weakens its apparent drive towards E major.⁵¹ Indeed, when $\hat{6}$ resolves to $\hat{5}$ at 29:6, beat 2, the resultant tonic chord is not heard as the culmination of a cadential progression, but rather as the beginning of a coda. In other words, it ‘does not group backwards with the preceding events of the cadence (those supported by an initial tonic, pre-dominant, and penultimate dominant), but rather groups forward with the subsequent events’.⁵² The cadence is

⁵¹ William E. Caplin, ‘Beyond the Classical Cadence: Thematic Closure in Early Romantic Music’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, Volume 40, Issue 1, 1 May 2018: 1–26, at 19.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3.

(to use Caplin's terminology) *dissipated*, marking it out as something essentially romantic (as opposed to classical) in its conception.⁵³ As a whole, the final four bars of Example 4.4 can be parsed quite plainly as a codetta-like tag, decorating the arrival on the tonic triad with extensive subdominant shading, which prepares us for the IV *Stufe* established by S^{1.1}. The upper voice does eventually come to rest on $\hat{1}$, but it is now sounded two octaves above middle C and seems entirely disparate from the earlier descent to $\hat{2}$.

Example 4.4: rehearsal figures 29:3–8

S^{1.1} suggests a marked transformation in harmonic syntax.⁵⁴ The classical is exchanged for the explicitly romantic and chromatic, as the listener is provided with a flash of octatonicism (see Figure 4.15).⁵⁵ The A6/4/3 chord at 30:1 can be interpreted retrospectively as an inverted F minor 7 sonority which has had its fifth nudged down by a semitone so as to produce the half-diminished seventh at 30:2. This chord is then

⁵³ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁴ I follow Hepokoski's and Darcy's *Elements of Sonata Theory* here by referring to new themes within the S group by a series of decimal numbers (i.e. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.) if their predecessor is not crowned with a PAC.

⁵⁵ Diana McVeagh describes this theme as 'jazzy': *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), p. 179. While I do not hear it in this way, I agree that it marks a decided change in historical temporality.

transformed into F#7 via an O²⁽³⁾ voice-leading transformation. As already explored in Chapter 1, Case Study 1.1, same-rooted half-diminished and dominant-seventh chords connect to one another in so-called octatonic pools. The particular octatonic collection implied in this instance is actually made explicit by the contiguous f#^{o7} and g#^{o7} chords at 30:2 to 3, albeit that these sonorities are produced by neighbour-note motions (D# to E in the alto and G# to F# in the bass): they are secondary by-products of voice-leading motion, rather than harmonic goals in and of themselves. Instead of instantiating a separate form of tonal syntax, these chords can be ascribed cadential functions with relative ease: they decorate what seems like a pre-dominant to dominant progression in E major.

30:1 2 3 4

octatonicism
(f#^{o7}) (g#^{o7})

chromatic
voice leading: f#⁷ f#^{o7} O²⁽³⁾ F#⁷ B

diatonic
cadence: IV⁶⁴₃ II⁷₃ V

Figure 4.15: idealised voice-leading reduction, 30:1–4

However, the tonicised B major chord at 30:4 is not (as might be imagined in prospect) a structural dominant. When placed in a middleground voice-leading context, it becomes apparent that it functions as a neighbour note, which decorates a chromatic third relation between A major 6/3 and C# major (see Figure 4.16).

30:1 4 8

A⁶ (V/E = LN) C#

Figure 4.16: voice-leading reduction, 30:1–8

The arrival on C# is consolidated by the introduction of a new theme, S^{1.2} (see Figure 4.17). At a middleground level, it reverses the earlier chromatic-mediant transformation between A6/3 and C#, effected by S^{1.1}. At a foreground level, it appears to articulate a series of diatonic cadential gestures in C# minor: the descending fourth in the bass between 30:9 and 11, for example, takes the local tonic to its dominant, and the passing harmonies which connect them can be ascribed relatively transparent tonal functions. However, there is more commonality between structural levels than one might at first be led to expect. While the D#4/3 and A7 chords between 30:9 and 10 both relate to C#'s dominant as pre-dominants – that is, as II₃7 and as a German sixth, respectively – their relationship to one another is more unusual. In voice-leading terms, they might be described as minimal perturbations of the same fully diminished tetrachord: namely, c#^{o7}. (For more on the idea of ‘minimal perturbation’, see Chapter 1, Case Study 1.1.) To transform one into the other, the inner two voices are held in common while the outer voices expand outwards in contrary semitonal motion: i.e. A#–F*–C#–D# → A#–G#–C#–E (O⁷⁽⁺⁾). The total voice-leading sum of this progression is two semitones, but because one goes up and the other goes down, they cancel each other out, which results in an actual voice-leading sum of zero. Richard Cohn has suggested that balanced, zero-actual-sum voice leading is the characteristic which distinguishes chromatic major-third motions from all other types of third progression.⁵⁶ Thus, while the surface of S^{1.2} is diatonic and its middleground chromatic, the former can still be seen to reference obliquely the principal voice-leading characteristic of the latter.

At 30:11, the descent of a fifth from the root of the dominant to the root of tonic is lifted into an inner voice, which means that G# and C# can still relate functionally as an undivided interval of a rising fifth in the bass voice. On this cadence's repetition, however, the bass falls linearly from G# to C# between 31:3 and 5: the quality of resolution is thus both more overtly contrapuntal and substantially weaker. Furthermore, the bass is harmonised not by the expected tonic chord, but with a leading-tone diminished seventh of A, which resolves to its implied tonic at

⁵⁶ Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromaticism and the Triad's Second Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 19.

31:8. While the first cadence is relatively strong, referencing the characteristic voice-leading of the chromatic-median middleground scaffold only obliquely, the second is deconstructed in order to facilitate a return to A6/3.

Figure 4.17: voice-leading reduction, 30:9–31:8

At 31:8 to 32:9, the chromatic relationship between A major and its upper-sharp mediant is used once again as a middleground scaffold, which is now filled in by a series of ascending fifth progressions (see Figure 4.18). B still features as a prominent middleground neighbour note: it is extensively prolonged, albeit its own tonicisation at 31:11 is durationally less significant than its repeated appearance as a deceptive resolution for the pair of local cadences in D major at 38:14 and 15. Although still being part of the secondary theme group, the rising-fifth motions that characterise this section are developmental in feel; so much so that the return to P-material at 33:1 for the actual development sounds almost like a recapitulation, despite its being in the Neapolitan major.

Figure 4.18: voice-leading reduction, 31:8–32:9

While it appears to begin in a recapitulatory vein, the development too soon gives way to a falling fifths cycle (F–B \flat –E \flat). This results both in a rising fourth progression in the bass, which connects F major with a diminished-seventh rooted on B \sharp (as a semitonal displacement of V7/E \flat), and a falling third progression in the upper voice (C–B \flat –A \flat), which transforms an F major tonic into ii of E \flat (see Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19: voice-leading reduction, 33:1–34:2

This diminished harmony is then transposed upwards by four consecutive whole tones, before resolving, as a leading-note diminished chord, to V $^{6/4}$ /E (see Figure 4.20). Considered as a whole, this passage might be interpreted as taking us from an implied B \flat to a real B \sharp , almost like a \sharp IV–V progression in E major. Any sense of sharp, semitonal juxtaposition, however, is ameliorated by the wash of chromaticism that separates these two (implied) middleground pillars.

Figure 4.20: voice-leading reduction, 34:1–12

At the beginning of the development's closing zone, $\hat{5}$ is finally regained in the upper voice (see Figure 4.21). The passage as a whole couples the *Kopfton* down the octave, in tandem with the sounding of a double harmonic scale. Used to create both linear melodic lines and vertical harmonic juxtapositions (see the C7 chord at 35:1, for example), this pitch collection suggests the modal writing of Lalo, Sarasate, Debussy, and Ravel (all of whom studied at the Paris Conservatoire) more than it does the Austro-Germanic classicism which the movement began by invoking.

Figure 4.21: voice-leading reduction, 35:1–36:1

Indeed, at this point, the frame of historical reference set up by the antecedent at the beginning of the movement appears to be well and truly broken. The meaning of such a breakage, however, is ambiguous. While some of the harmonic progressions described above are not quintessentially classical (and are therefore out of kilter with the aesthetic trajectory implied by the Adagio's opening antecedent), Riemann argues that so long as the music in question can be shown to have emerged out of an ordered, cadential framework (even a chromatically modified one), it might still be said to participate in the classical spirit, which is (for Riemann at least) timeless and universal: in the hands of 'genius', classicism could be relied on to overthrow the tyrannical onslaught of history and change, so that an everlasting Eden of tonal logic could be revealed.⁵⁷

Take, for example, the middleground analysis presented in Figure 4.22. It demonstrates that, rather than behaving classically, the Adagio prioritises maximally

⁵⁷ Rehding, *Hugo Riemann*, p. 114.

smooth voice-leading over more orthodox forms of prolongation. The romantic, chromatic colouring which characterises $S^{1.1}$ and $^{1.2}$ is not merely surface decoration: it manifests itself at a far deeper level of structure. Far from causing tonal problems, however, the resultant chromatic-thirds cycle (i.e. $A-C\#-F\sharp$) can be seen to connect the third of IV (30:1) to the root of the dominant (34) via a chromaticised passing motion in the bass, which resolves to a $I_6/4$ chord for the beginning of the recapitulation at rehearsal figure 35. Despite its fast-forward through history, then, the Adagio might still be regarded as fundamentally classical in terms of its underlying conceptual framework: its medium (or narrative structure) is modern, but its message is ultimately conservative. That is to say, no matter how adventurous Elgar's musical materials become in this movement, they can never fully break with classical tonality.

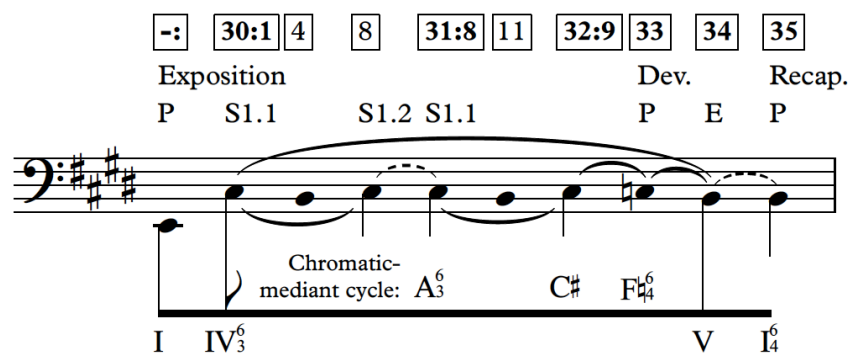


Figure 4.22: middleground graph, :-35

Section 4.3: Andante–Allegro

While the Moderato–Allegro and the Adagio exhibit the subtle infiltration of near-contemporary music history into attempted representations of the musical past, the finale attempts desperately to prevent modernity's incursions. Displaying no anachronisms, it is the only chamber movement that might genuinely be characterised as straightforwardly nineteenth-century in character. However, both the finale's confident rhetoric and its harmonic and formal conservatism tell their own historical story. Writing of the movement's coda, Jerrold Northrop Moore observes that

such an apotheosis of melody in 1919 could leave its composer more isolated than ever. When the younger survivors returned from the war, their first resolve would

be to destroy every shred of the old world – the world which created the war that had maimed and coarsened their lives.⁵⁸

If the first two movements of the Quintet suggest that Elgar had recognised something of the complexity of the post-war reality which Moore describes, then the finale reveals his failure ultimately to come to terms with it. He supplies us instead with an affirmational victory, which Moore claims had not ‘closed any work of his since the First Symphony’.⁵⁹ Indeed, in the face of a war which ended both with armistice rather than victory and yet a previously unfathomable loss of life, such affirmation might have appeared disingenuous, perhaps even crass and insensitive. Despite this, Harper-Scott still avers that there is a dark saying immanent in this movement. He suggests that its ‘outcome is similar to earlier works built on a conflict between chromatic and diatonic music: the final return of the ‘heroic’ main theme comes after the most ghastly chromatic episode of the movement. Its strength is doubtful’.⁶⁰ In other words, unresolved chromatic problems leave a stink which might still be said to linger as an affecting presence even after the final cadence has sounded. Close analysis of the finale, however, is able to demonstrate that all such cases of chromaticism are absorbed back into consonance at a deeper structural level. Indeed, chromaticism does not have purchase on the tonal means of production; any extra responsibilities or privileges it acquires are officially sanctioned by the managing forces of diatonicism so as to ensure that their grip on power is never substantially challenged. Furthermore, as Patrick McCreless has noted, ‘instead of reserving chromaticism for representation of evil, doubt, fear, and terror, [Elgar] at times foregrounds it in some of his most upright, optimistic, masculine, proud music, thereby cutting directly against the grain of the reductive binary opposition’ between light and dark.⁶¹ Rather than threatening or dissimulating the movement’s tonal scaffolding, Elgar uses chromaticism in this movement to intensify the form’s principal tonicisations. It is also fraught with none of the paragenic ambiguities that plague the first movement’s sonata-form design.

⁵⁸ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, p. 738.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 737.

⁶⁰ Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar: An Extraordinary Life*, p. 120.

⁶¹ Patrick McCreless, ‘Elgar and theories of chromaticism’ in *Elgar Studies* (eds. J. P. E. Harper-Scott & Julian Rushton), pp. 1–49, at p. 2.

The battle which Harper-Scott perceives between diatonic and chromatic forces might be said to play itself out at different depths of musical structure. At a more middleground level, the simplicity of the diatonic structures composed out by the exposition and the recapitulation (i.e. an initial ascent and an *Urlinie* descent, respectively) is seemingly contradicted by the middleground chromaticism of the development, which traces a special kind of harmonic trajectory, first described by the mid-nineteenth-century German music theorist, Carl Friedrich Weitzmann. At a more foreground level, the primary- and secondary-theme groups appear to be divergent in their harmonic characters. The former is (in Harper-Scott's words) 'assured, diatonic and strong',⁶² albeit that the antecedent and consequent phrases of its repeated, periodic structure are separated by an extensive chromatic interpolation. (As Moore notes, however, these 'extending variants [do] not challenge the tonality' of this theme: 'their chromatics only ma[ke] a slight winter haze before the sun of A major'.⁶³) The latter, by contrast, is characterised by modal mixture, chromatic-mediant relations, and whole-tone inflections. However, at whichever structural level such chromaticisms might be found, I argue that they can often be shown to have relatively straightforward tonal functions (i.e. tonic, subdominant, or dominant).

§4.3.1 Deep Middleground

Writing of the Quintet as a whole, Brian Trowell supposed that 'it may be that Canon W. H. T. Gairdner was right to hear in the finale [...] "a second chance of a blessed, healthy, sane life in a restored world"'.⁶⁴ An examination of the movement's deep middleground provides clear support for such a view. The movement as a whole composes out a complete *Ursatz*, which can be read as a symbol of hope: perhaps the world might once again be unified, as the finale is, and thus rid of the fragmentation that had come to make it almost unrecognisable during the preceding years of conflict.

In the exposition (see Figure 4.23), P composes out an initial ascent to the *Kopfton*, which is then prolonged via upper and lower neighbour notes as part of S: these support IV and II₃ pre-dominant harmonies, respectively. In the recapitulation,

⁶² Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar: An Extraordinary Life*, p. 120.

⁶³ Moore, *Elgar*, p. 736.

⁶⁴ Brian Trowell, 'The Road to Brinkwells: the late chamber music' in Lewis Foreman (ed.) *The Music of Elgar – Vol 2: Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War* (Worcester: Elgar Enterprises, 2014), pp. 347–387, at p. 371.

a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ descent is counterpointed with a I-V-I *Bassbrechung*, in which the gap between I and V is filled in by means of an arpeggiation (see Figure 4.24). The melodic resolution of the *Urlinie* to $\hat{1}$ is elided with the beginning of the Coda; S's final return at rehearsal figure 72 secures the delayed tonic root in the bass.

Rehearsal figs.: 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53
 Intra RF bar numbers: 13 14 6 11 6 9 12 5 10 12 5 7 11 12 10 16 17 2

P1 P2 Tr. S1 P1 S2 CZ
 $\hat{1}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{3}$ UN interpolation LN $\hat{3}$

I V i V I V V: I^b ii V I: ii V I IV: I I V vi^b ii: i^b II₃ V ^bVI^b V
 I IV → II₃ V^b I
 pre-dominant prolongation

Figure 4.23: Elgar, Piano Quintet, Op. 84, 3rd movement, 44–53:2

60:3 8 9 62:1 4 5 11 63 68 72
 Recapitulation Coda
 P1 P2 S P1 S1
 $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$

I V I vii^{arpegg}/d d a I^b
 I iv₃/V V I

Figure 4.24: middleground graph, 60:3–72

Like the Quintet's opening movement, the finale inverts the characteristic tonal trajectory of a traditional sonata form: the exposition seems to prolong only the tonic at a background level, as in a textbook recapitulation, while the actual recapitulation presents S in the dominant, as is typical of an exposition. Such sonata 'deformations' are not necessarily hermeneutically charged; it is more likely that Elgar adapted the

conventional harmonic–syntactic ordering of this form to ensure that the music was not too predictable.⁶⁵

The development might be interpreted as a foil for the deep structural diatonicism exhibited by the exposition and the recapitulation: it traverses a middleground Weitzmann region, which is composed of the six consonant triads – three major and three minor – derivable from the upwards or downwards, semitonal resolution of each of a D_b-augmented triad's chord tones (D_b–F–A_♯).⁶⁶ Figure 4.25 provides a graphic representation of this voice-leading complex. The relevant triads are adjacently connected through a chain of alternating *Nebenverwandt* and relative transformations: the former map from a major triad to a minor triad a fifth below (or vice versa); the latter raise the fifth of a major triad by a tone, or lower the root of a minor triad by the same magnitude. Elgar only uses two non-adjacent harmonic relations from this region, connected by less characteristic P1 and Lp transformations, in the development's middleground. P is short for 'parallel transformation', which changes the mode of a triad, while L stands for 'leading-tone transformation', which takes the root of a major triad down to its leading tone, or displaces the fifth of a minor triad up by a semitone.⁶⁷ However, whichever transformation is used, none ever exceeds two semitonal units of voice-leading work. The last part of the cycle takes D minor to A major (i.e. the global tonic) via an N transformation in preparation for the beginning of the recapitulation.

⁶⁵ While the Quintet's first movement similarly composes out a complete *Ursatz*, the feeling of resolution that is thereby produced is complicated by the paragenetic spaces which frame its sonata narrative. Structural closure is not all-consuming in that particular instance, but is rather one aspect of the music, which is to be counterpointed with other, potentially more disquieting ones. In the finale, by contrast, there is no opposing force to undermine the success of resolution; Elgar succeeds in repressing the contemporary music–historical situation which had permeated the previous two movements.

⁶⁶ Perhaps the most canonical example of a composer's thoroughgoing exploration of a Weitzmann region is the trombone solo from the first-movement development section of Schubert's Ninth Symphony (bars 304 to 315). Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, pp. 56–8.

⁶⁷ As elsewhere in the thesis, differences in case indicate whether the transformations in question produce major or minor triads.

Weitzmann region (Development)

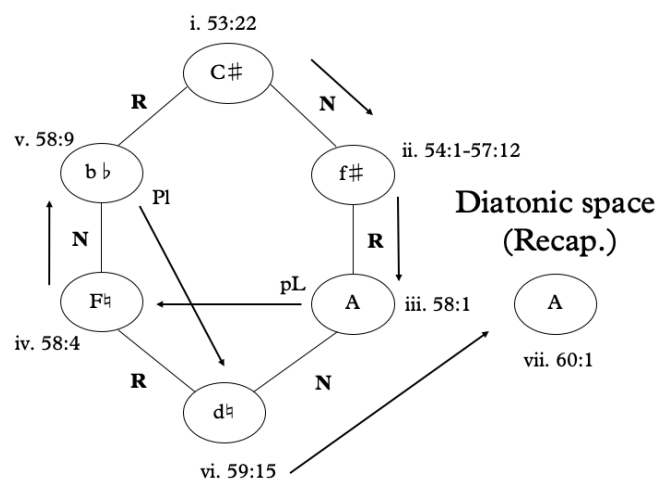


Figure 4.25: Weitzmann Region, 53:22–60:1

Figure 4.26 reimagines Figure 4.25 as a set of ‘consonant’ rooms, all of which are connected to one another by an ‘augmented’ corridor through which a composer must pass if they are to call in on the region’s various harmonic tenants. As Richard Cohn puts it, ‘some music will linger there [in the corridor], some will invite passing notice of its features, and some will rush quickly through the passageway without registering any impression of it’.⁶⁸

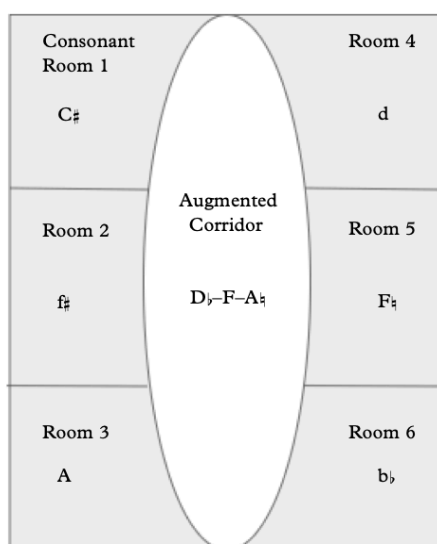


Figure 4.26: Weitzmann Corridor (Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, Figure 4.1b, p. 60)

⁶⁸ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, p. 60.

The transformations from C \sharp to f \sharp , and A to F \flat , rush through the augmented triad (i.e. it is not sounded at all and can therefore only be inferred from the voice-leading structure Cohn and Weitzmann have together elucidated). The transformations from f \sharp to A, and from b \flat to d, by contrast, foreground this dissonant and liminal harmony. When the bass of an F \sharp minor triad slips to F \flat between 57:12 and 13, Elgar's D \flat -F-A \flat augmented triad is briefly spotlighted, before its resolution to the A major 6/4 chord at 58:1. At 59:2 to 4, 6 to 8, and 10 to 12, by contrast, this augmented triad is prolonged almost like a self-sufficient harmony; it is imbued with special rhetorical emphasis on account of the so far unused tremolandi effect in the viola (see Example 4.5). It is almost as if Elgar holds off from properly revealing the secret facilitator of his chromatic magic tricks until right at the very end of the development.

59

The image shows a musical score for rehearsal figures 59:1-5. The score is written for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score consists of five measures. The Viola part is marked with *fp* in each measure. The Violoncello part has a tremolandi effect in the first measure. The Piano part has a septuplet in the first measure. The score is marked with *fp cresc.* in the second and third measures. A plus sign (+) is located below the Piano part in the second measure.

Example 4.5: rehearsal figures 59:1-5

The second node of the development's Weitzmann region – namely, F \sharp minor – is the harmony which receives the most extended prolongation. This process is begun by the antiphonal passage at rehearsal figure 54 (see Example 4.6). Of particular interest is the harmony sounded in tandem with the piano's septuplets at 54:5, which is voiced over a retained C \sharp pedal.

Example 4.6: rehearsal figures 54:1–7

While having a dark, subdominant aspect when presented both locally and vertically, the function of this $g\sharp^{07}$ chord is altered when it is composed-out horizontally as part of an implied middleground arpeggiation (see Figure 4.27). The culminating local harmony of this progression – namely $G\sharp 7$ – can be related to its middleground progenitor by means of an $O^{2(3)}$ voice-leading transformation in an octatonic pool. Both chords have dominant function in A major, owing to the $G\sharp$ leading tone on which they are built. Indeed, at 57:4, $G\sharp 7$ moves to the dominant’s pure chord form, $E7$, by means of a pL transformation. However, the latter harmony does not discharge to A major; retrospectively, it can be interpreted as neighbouring chord to the $F\sharp$ minor *Stufe* at 57:12, which is then modified by a relative transformation at 58:3.

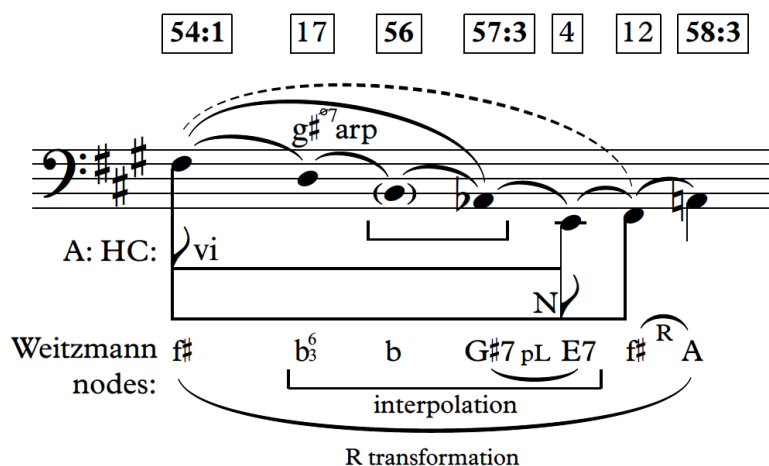


Figure 4.27: middleground graph, 54:1–58:3

Given the predominance of smooth voice leading in this section, one might be tempted to suggest that it articulates a form of harmonic syntax separate from that of classical tonality. Figure 4.28 maps the music between 54:1 and 57:4 on to a Riemannian *Tonnetz*. A *neo*-Riemannian might suggest that the diagonal corridor, made up of dashed triangles, is composed of transformations which draw on the octatonic (rather than the diatonic) scale, and which thus necessarily disrupt the tonal significations implied by the initial F# minor triad; I follow the example of Steven Rings and interpret the relevant voice-leading transformations in terms of a lightening or darkening of tonal colour instead.⁶⁹ The passage begins on f#, which sounds like a darker version of the global tonic, A major, on account of its leaning towards the subdominant. Pulled into an octatonic corridor at rehearsal figure 55, it ultimately traverses pitch space in a north-westerly direction, which leads to a brightening of tonal colour as we move towards the dominant side of the tonic. This V harmony is achieved at 57:4. The apparent contradiction here between diatonicism and chromaticism is to a certain extent illusory: rather than working against one another, the chromatic serves to intensify the relative tonal darkness or brightness of an interpolation which colours a middleground transformation between F# minor and A major.

⁶⁹ Steven Rings, 'Riemannian analytical values: paleo- and neo-' in *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Riemannian Music Theories*, eds. Edward Gollin and Alexander Rehding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 487–506.

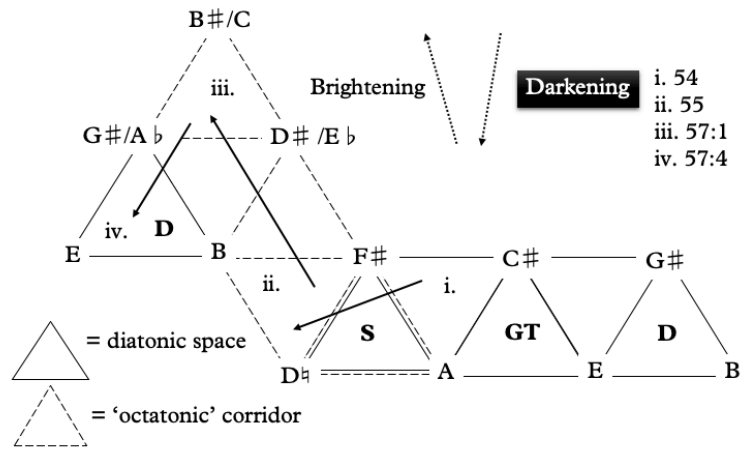


Figure 4.28: Diatonic Space; Octatonic Corridor, 54–57:4

Much the same might be said about the tonal quality of the harmonic relationships immanent in the nodal layout of the Weitzmann region itself. Figure 4.29 demonstrates that the non-tonic triads between rehearsal figures 54 to 59 – namely, f#, F#₇, b₇, and d – can be described as functional substitutes for the subdominant of A major, derived either from mixture (i.e. D minor instead of D major) or from embellishment via other forms of voice-leading transformation (including, l, R, and Lp). While a dissonant augmented triad might be responsible for facilitating the connections between these chords, its indigenous chromatic language merely contributes new features to the invading language of diatonicism (i.e. chromaticism comes to function as a substrate). Indeed, as further indicated by Figure 4.29, the Weitzmann region’s broader middleground function is to decorate a descending major-third arpeggiation, which also prolongs the tonic: i.e. it shades the brightness of the upper-sharp mediant C# at 53:22, ahead of the return to A major at rehearsal figure 60.

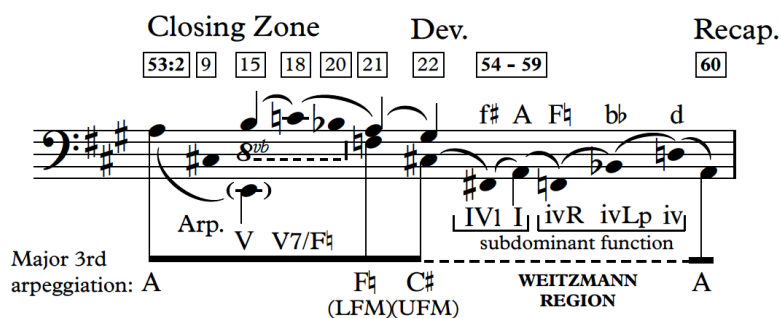


Figure 4.29: middleground graph, 53:2–60

To summarise, the exposition and the recapitulation are diatonic in organisation, while the development appears to be chromatic. However, it can equally be shown that the development expresses a diatonic subdominant function via chromatic means. Rather than establishing a split in the form, it is integrated into the movement's larger tonal architecture. Indeed, that the development should bring back melodic material from the Quintet's first movement – namely, the rearrangement of the introduction found in the closing zone of the exposition (rehearsal figure 9) between rehearsal figures 55 and 56, and a fragment of S2 between 57:6 and 59:1 – stresses that its function in relation to the work as a whole is integrative rather than disintegrative. It is fitting that its tonal plan should follow suit.

§4.3.2 Foregrounds

P1 articulates a loosely periodic structure, although Elgar's conception of this phrasal unit is clearly romantic rather than classical: its consequent is drastically expanded and foregrounds tetrachordal voice leading, while even the antecedent is inflected by mixture (see Figure 4.30). Its initial tonic is prolonged by neighbour-note motions and a modally mixed $i6/5-vii^{07}-I6/3$ progression, as part of an unfolding from $C\#$ to A in an inner voice, which is answered by an unfolding from $G\#$ to B in the soprano. Taken together, these elaborated thirds articulate a half cadence. $\hat{3}$ is attained at 44:13, albeit that this feeling of arrival is undermined by its being elided with a cycle of fifths, which serves to compose out a third progression between A and $F\#$ in the bass; the latter note is harmonised by a pre-dominant sounding half-diminished seventh, which augurs a tonicisation of the dominant (i.e. ii^{07}/V). However, the bass E at 44:16 is mis-harmonised as another half-diminished seventh. Twice transformed by $O^{7(-/+)}$ voice-leading motions, this chord becomes $a\#^{07}$ at 45:5, which in turn moves up by a semitone to b^{07} at 45:9. These seventh chords, which are the sole preoccupation of the musical surface for twelve bars, account for around forty percent of P1's duration. Their arrival is marked both by filigree arpeggio figures in the piano and by obsessive repetitions of an adapted version of the motif from P1's opening bar, which together create a wave-like effect. It is as if diatonicism has temporarily been washed away. However, essentially tonal gestures appear to lie beneath the surface: the $C\#-E-$

A \sharp motion in the bass might be interpreted as an arpeggiation of vii/ii^{O7} in A major, for example. This interpretation is vindicated by the arrival of the pre-dominant at 45:9 and its subsequent resolution to V/A at 45:14. Interestingly, the arpeggiated texture and fragmented repetition of P1's opening motif, starting at 45:1, is maintained into the prolongation of the dominant at 45:14. While this timbral modulation might first have indicated a change of state, to which weltering chromaticism is indigenous, this other-worldly texture is soon brought back into the cadential world of diatonicism.

Figure 4.30: voice-leading reduction, 44:1–46:1

P2 appears initially to be a repetition of P1, but differences soon emerge (see Figure 4.31). For example, the slip of a tone to D \natural in the bass at 46:7 produces an effect akin to that of an abandoned cadence: i.e. the root-position V at 46:6 is heard to be penultimate (as in a perfect cadence) rather than ultimate (as in a half cadence); the slip of a tone to D at 46:7 disrupts the expected resolution to the tonic, and because one might have expected the dominant to resolve, it is now too unstable to be heard retrospectively as a goal in itself. The 6/3 chord at 46:9 is a pivot chord: it functions both as a tonic and as a pre-dominant neighbour note to the dominant of the dominant at 46:10, which resolves to E6/3 at 46:11. A sequence, composed of alternating motions of a major third and a fifth between 46:11 and 47:4, carries the resultant bass G \sharp to the dominant's root by means of a descending third progression. As part of a consolidation of this tonicisation, a half cadence is then articulated, albeit the culminating B7 chord is transformed into b O7 via $O^{2(3)}$ voice-leading across an octatonic pool at 44:9, which confirms B's ultimate identity as a ii *Stufe* in A major.

While the upper voice of P1 was static, P2 composes out an initial ascent to the *Kopfton*, which is confirmed by the IAC at 48:1.

Figure 4.31: voice-leading reduction, 46:1–48:1

$\hat{3}$ is subsequently prolonged as part of the transition (see Figure 4.32). A movement to $\Pi_{\#3}9$ is composed out via a string of descending, consecutive 10ths, but rather than functioning as a pre-dominant, which discharges to the dominant, a semitonal descent is executed in the bass between 48:11 and 13. The *Kopfton*, maintained in the upper voice throughout this process, graduates from a dissonant extension (i.e. a ninth) to a consonant chord-tone in a dissonant chord (i.e. $\text{vii}^{\text{o}4/2}/\text{D}$), to a consonance in a consonant chord (i.e. third of A major). This series of transformations or ‘puns’ on the *Kopfton*’s meaning facilitates its local functional change from $\hat{3}$ of A major to $\hat{7}$ of D; it resolves upwards to $\hat{8}$ at 49:1 for the beginning of the S group.

Figure 4.32: voice-leading reduction, 48:1–49:1

Much like P1, S1 has conventionally diatonic middleground scaffolding: an $\hat{8}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ motion in the upper voice is counterpointed with a I–V–I progression in the bass (see Figure 4.33). This *Bassbrechung* appears to be filled in by the composing out of a scale rooted on D, albeit one that is modally mixed. The major mode is used to fill in the descending fourth between $\hat{8}$ and $\hat{5}$ (49:3 to 4), while the gap between $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{1}$ is peopled by scale degrees derived from the minor mode (49:5 to 50:1). Perhaps the most striking parts of this theme, however, are the parallel descending major chords between 40:5 and 7, decorated by a series of three parallel transformations. This brief passage can be parsed in two different ways, either as a modally mixed descending V–IV– \natural III progression in D major/minor; or as a series of whole-tone transpositions of a major triad. The parallel transformations spotlighted in the upper voice do little to clarify this issue: on the one hand, the marked descent from a major to a minor third can be heard to suggest a change of mode, crucial to the idea of mixture; while on the other, the descending string of semitones can serve to make the music sound more fundamentally chromatic and sequential, which supports the hearing of whole-tone transpositions. The semitonal descent in the bass from $F\sharp_4$ to $E\sharp_4$ at 49:7 serves to confirm the former interpretation (at least for the moment), but this ambiguity is played on throughout the movement.

Figure 4.33: voice-leading reduction, 49:1–50:1

It is only right at the movement’s end, though, as part of the final statement of S1 in the coda, that a properly whole-tone progression is actually consolidated. As shown in Example 4.7, E^3 is coupled down to E^2 as part of a broader V–i motion in the global

tonic between 72:9 and 73:1. This octave span is filled in linearly by a series of four whole-tone transpositions. However, the expected $G_b/F\sharp$ root, which would have effected the fifth such transposition, is deflected to $F\sharp$, so as to facilitate a Phrygian-cadence-like close to the tonic. The whole-tone scale does nothing to disrupt the abiding sense of tonality; it is heard merely as an intensification of a middleground $V-iv/3-i$ cadence: that is, as a means of further decorating the tonic after the closure of the *Ursatz* at 72:1.

Example 4.7: rehearsal figures 72:9–73:1

Returning to the exposition, S1 is repeated at 50:1, albeit it now articulates a middleground $I-II_{\flat 3}-V-vi$ deceptive cadence in D (see Figure 4.34). Despite the theme's re-beginning on a vertical major tonic, the articulation of D's dominant at 50:12 results from a series of linear progressions derived from the D *minor* harmonic scale: see the third progression $A-B_b-C\sharp$ from 50:5 to 9, which transforms V/D into vi/E ; and the descending fifth progression to V ($E-D-C-B_b-A$) between 50:10 and 12.

Figure 4.34: middleground graph, 50:1–51:5

The B minor 6/3 chord produced by the deceptive cadence at 51:5 is tonicised by what appears to be yet another repeat of S1, but the music soon gives way to a reminiscence of the filigree arpeggiated figure from P1 between 51:7 and 9. Elided with a deceptive resolution, this time to $\sharp VI^{6/3}/b$, S2 begins at 52:1 (see Figure 4.35). It is composed of a series of foreground third relations (namely G to B, a to F to A, and g to E \flat), which themselves decorate a deep middleground movement from G major to E \flat major, as lower-flat and upper-sharp mediants, respectively, of B major. We return to the latter triad at 52:17, after which it is prolonged once again by juxtaposition with its upper-sharp mediant between 52:17 and 19, before its function is revealed ultimately as a pre-dominant $II_{\sharp 3}$ in a cadence that produces a return to the global tonic at 53:2 for the beginning of the recapitulation.

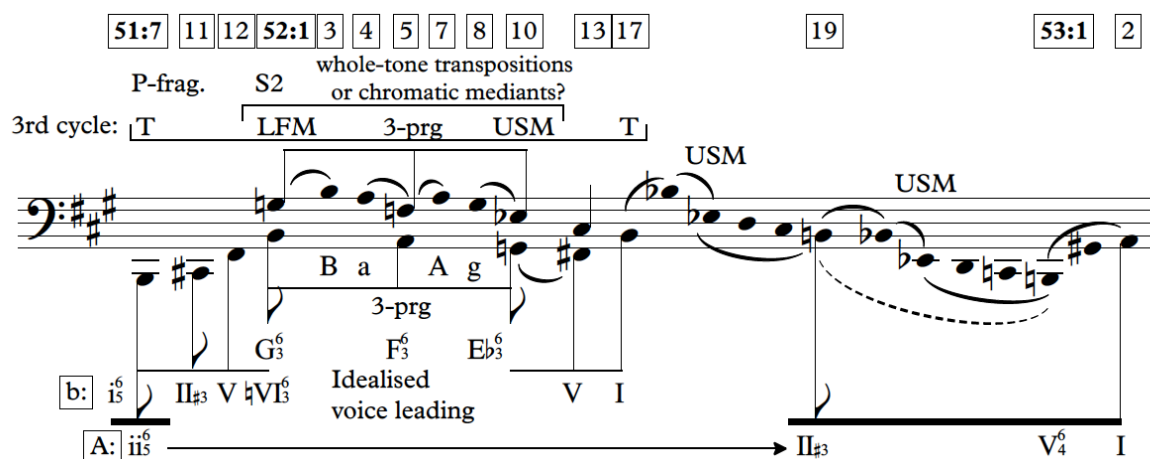


Figure 4.35: middleground graph, 51:7–53:2

S1 and 2 both have lucid middlegrounds, which can be seen to decorate or at least to interact with cadential structures. While the use of mixture is more widespread in S1 than it is in P1, this is a difference of degree rather than of kind. Furthermore, the smooth voice-leading of the chromatic-mediator relations which populate S2 are mirrored by the octatonic, tetrachordal transformations that are deployed as part of the expansion of P1's consequent. The apparent contradiction between the two thematic groups does not run so deep as has been suggested: they both feature extensive chromaticism, which is deployed in order to prolong *Stufen* that compose out middleground diatonic cadences.

§4.3.3 Concluding comments

Elgar revealed to his 'Windflower', Alice Stuart Wortley, that 'the Quintet is not of this world'.⁷⁰ Its introduction blends a classical cadence with modernist instrumentation, creating a musical landscape in which past and present are imbricated; its second movement begins in late eighteenth-century Germany, while its development section ends with the 'oriental' modalities of early-twentieth-century Paris. The third movement, by contrast, wallows in a style of composition firmly consigned to the past, as a vain effort to evade the present. The Quintet begins by exploring new worlds, or at least worlds in which the new and the old are uniquely arranged; it ends with a backward-looking nostalgia. While Michael Kennedy has argued that 'the Quintet has a tinge of bitterness, even steeliness, for all its romanticism, which gives it strength', it must also be noted that the finale does much to negate the Quintet's earlier, more complicated, quasi-modernist sentiments.⁷¹ Steeliness melts away and in turn succumbs to cliché. Elgar acknowledges the reality of the new world, but ultimately turns away from it.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Trowell, 'The Road to Brinkwells', p. 371.

⁷¹ Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 236.

Conclusion

Out of us all
That make rhymes,
Will you choose
Sometimes —
As the winds use
A crack in the wall
Or a drain,
Their joy or their pain
To whistle through —
Choose me,
You English words?

Edward Thomas, 'Words' (1916)¹

The apparent regularity of rhyme in the first stanza of Edward Thomas's 'Words' might suggest to a listener, at least in prospect, that this poem may play itself out within the confines of a traditional form. As Peter Howarth has noted, however, "'Words' is free verse, in the sense that there is no pattern to the number of beats per line, which range from one to three".² This becomes more apparent as the poem progresses, and certain key line endings, of which 'words' is the most obvious, seem to go unrhymed. However, even when these appear to be unique in sound, occurring without reference to that which directly precedes or succeeds them, they can be shown always to have an end-of-line counterpart 'when the poem is perceived as a whole [...] outside the flow of words'.³ 'Words' [for example] does not find its companion until line 18 and "me" until line 26'.⁴ Thomas's concluding wish (namely, to 'stand perchance / in ecstasy, / Fixed and free / In a rhyme' [lines 56–59]) is exemplified by the very poem which he is writing: traditional rhyming limitations and balance are transfused into a metrically free structure.

Even though Thomas's poem is romantic in theme (in that it reflects on the poet's role as a personal conduit for impersonal inspiration), Thomas inflects this idea in an extraordinary manner: the poet is transfigured 'into a drain rather than Coleridge's Aeolian harp, and asks for ecstasy only "sometimes", in case it should become [...]

¹ *Selected Poems of Edward Thomas*, ed. R. S. Thomas (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), p. 40.

² Howarth, *British Poetry*, p. 79.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 80

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

predictable'.⁵ In other words, the potential romantic clichés which are strewn throughout the poem – words are, according to Thomas, 'light as dreams, Tough as oak, / Precious as gold, / As poppies and corn, / Or an old cloak' (lines 13–17) – engage in a dialogue with more unusual, tumbledown images, such as the wind whistling through a drain or a wall crack, by which they are lightly marred or ironized. As R. S. Thomas wrote, 'much of [Edward Thomas's] surface material was the same as the Georgians'; but his treatment of it was different. A different sensibility was at work'.⁶ 'Words' demonstrates that this modern sensibility is immanent in the interactions between part and whole, rather than in atomised instants.

Thomas's poem might also be read as a rumination on the fundamental paradox of Nature, at once both immutable and in a constant state of flux, which is used to figure language's ontology. For example, words are described as being 'older far / Than oldest yew, -' and yet they are 'worn new / Again and again: / Young as our streams / After rain' (lines 35–38). While the poem's intimations of the pastoral mode might be taken to provide refuge from the onslaught of history, it is ultimately the passing of Nature's seasons, the growth of its foliage and the flowing of its rivers that confirm the inexorability of time's passing, even if modern urbanity is seemingly exiled. In much the same way, it is implied that traditional words can be retained by a poet, but that they will always be 'worn new' by modernity, which expands their semantic ambit or subtly alters the syntaxes in which they occur, leading inevitably to the production of fresh meanings. It is in this sense that Thomas's poems can be described, in Samuel Hynes's phrase, as 'both new and old'.⁷ They mark a union of the 'dead and unborn' (line 24), both states being charged with a potential strangeness, alien to the present.

Despite its relative brevity, 'Words' captures, in miniature, three of the essential arguments which this thesis has sought to make about both Elgar's chamber music and its relative technical novelty, whether the latter characteristic is interpreted as an extension of tradition or rather as a quiet disruption of it by modernism.

Firstly, the tonality and form of many of the chamber works might be described, in Thomas's gentle paradox, as 'fixed and free'. Take, for example, my analysis of the

⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

⁶ R. S. Thomas (ed.), 'Introduction' in *Selected Poems of Edward Thomas*, p. 12.

⁷ Samuel Hynes, 'Edward Thomas' in *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 91–97, at p. 96.

strange and highly chromatic passage from the development section of the String Quartet's finale in Chapter 1, Case Study 1.1. Through examination of its tetrachordal voice leading, it was ascertained that the passage's symmetrical, octatonic pitch collections, which often disrupt the fundamentally asymmetrical tonic–dominant relationships on which classical monotonicity is based, are used to prepare the movement's principal cadences. Elements associated with non-tonal freedom are simultaneously tonally fixed. The highly unorthodox passage before the onset of the development in the Violin Sonata's finale, in the place where one would normally expect an EEC, evidences a similar tendency. In Chapter 2, Section 2.2, I argued that, on the one hand, its tonal import is extremely ambiguous: its alternation of augmented and major triads in a descending sequence sounds nothing like that which one would usually encounter at this point in a stereotypical sonata form; it is a moment of apparently aimless wandering, temporarily freed from the reified sonata template in which the rest of the movement plays itself out. On the other hand, this *sui generis* passage is not only contextualised within a 'fixed' sonata form, but its seemingly 'free' materials can also be 'fixed' as dominant-like: the aforementioned sequence is grounded by an E Lydian scale in the bass, which replicates exactly the scale of the tonicised dominant *Stufe*, B major. The passage in question is thus both disorientating in its aural effect (dissonant, seemingly unmotivated) and highly structured in its relation to the overall form, in that it still refers obliquely to the key area to which the sonata *was supposed to go*.

Secondly, in the same way in which Thomas's poem subtly subverts romantic themes and clichés with a modern strain of realist bathos, Elgar often uses simple and/or traditional materials to complex structural effect. In Chapter 4, for example, it was demonstrated how the relatively conventional sonata-form design of the Piano Quintet's first movement is complicated by an introduction–coda frame which presents a number of different topics, associated with different periods of music history, as a series of overlaid, geological strata. The romantic teleology of the movement's interior sonata is thus complicated by modernist temporal disorientation in its paragenetic spaces. Similarly, in the Quintet's second movement, a quintessentially Beethovenian antecedent phrase, signifying classical balance, soon malfunctions. The remainder of the movement fast-forwards through a number of historically later forms of musical material: namely, early-romantic cadential evasions, mid-romantic intra-thematic

chromatic-third cycles and late-nineteenth-century/early-twentieth-century modal writing. While the opening eight bars could have been written by any number of classical-period composers, the movement as a whole could only have been written by a composer with an early-twentieth-century outlook. In Chapter 1, Case Study 1.3, by contrast, I argued that Elgar's use of a typically early romantic diatonic progression in B_♭ major was merely an illusion of the foreground, deployed in order to dissimulate an entirely chromatic background, more characteristic of later harmonic practices. As in Thomas's work, then, the clichéd parts of Elgar's chamber music should not be treated as synecdoches for the movements in which they occur: the whole is often both more nuanced and modern than its traditional components might suggest.

Thirdly, this thesis has also attempted to disclose ways in which traditional materials in the chamber music have been 'worn new', both in and by Elgar's post-war contexts. In Chapter 3, for example, I explained how Elgar's emulation of Brahmsian counterpoint in the String Quartet's *Piacevole* displays, on closer inspection, an aversion to closure in excess of that which is typical of a romantic musical aesthetic. While it is free of the trenchant chromaticism exhibited by some of the other chamber movements, its diatonicism is wonderfully de-centered and the undermining of cadence points, even in the denouement, is as subtle as it is disintegrative. Of course, while tonal pairing in a monotonal context is nothing out of the ordinary, Elgar's adoption of this technique is so pervasive in this instance that monotonicity comes to appear tenuous as a default category of interpretation: it is difficult to prove, rather than merely to assert, the movement's true key centre. Put another way, the typical tonal gestures, which Elgar sometimes adopts (i.e. middleground cadential structures, $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{6}$ voice-leading displacements of the tonic, etc.), either have their surfaces weathered and altered by history (in that they become more ambiguous or less clear-cut) or, in the process, fall away from the larger tonal edifices, to which they had previously been attached. In Chapter 2, Section 2.3, by contrast, I argued that Elgar's use of tonal pairing in conjunction with a sonata-form framework is modelled almost exactly on the practices of Schumann and Brahms. There is little about the movement that is not explicitly nineteenth-century. What is 'worn new' in this instance is not the musical material itself, but the contexts in which it is received. While the interaction of sonata form and tonal pairing was originally pioneered by Schumann, the German probably did not think of

the latter technique as deforming the structure implied by the former: they were different compositional strategies which stood on equal terms, and could be engaged in or disengaged from at will. Elgar's familiarity with common, textbook-sonata-form models, however, makes it plausible that he would have interpreted Schumann's use of tonal pairing as a positive means of disrupting a reified, perhaps even Procrustean form. This gesture, I have claimed, can be read as part of a more general twentieth-century scepticism about the idea of teleology, which was, in large part, a response to the Great War.

In my Introduction, I argued that two sets of critics (broadly speaking, those writing between 1919 and the 1930s, and from the early 2000s onwards) have been sensitive to the Thomasine dichotomies which define Elgar's chamber music. The aim of this thesis has been to give their often intuitive, descriptive and/or allusive comments in praise of these works music-analytical traction. This has necessitated in-depth, technical discussion of Elgar's use of: octatonic, tetrachordal voice leading; the Lydian mode as an oblique form of dominant substitute; static *Kopftöne*; middleground dissonances (i.e. major and minor third cycles); tonal pairing; radically decentred diatonicism; reversed sonata form; 'exotic' modalities, including the double-harmonic minor scale, as well as various permutations of the Phrygian mode; Weitzmann regions; whole-tone transpositions; and incomplete forms of *Ursätze*, etc. However, as the foregoing chapters have demonstrated, it is not these kinds of materials, in and of themselves, which determine the originality of the chamber works. Rather, it is both the ways in which they interact with more traditional, diatonic materials and also the new syntaxes which consequently emerge, with which this thesis ultimately concerns itself.

I also noted in the Introduction that positively inflected criticism of the chamber works tends towards bivalence: earlier commentators tend to argue for the novel conservatism of this music, while later scholars often stress its reactive-modernist tendencies. I have in this thesis attempted not to resolve this argument in favour of either view (in that I have left both aesthetic characterisations open as plausible interpretations) but rather to historicise it. I have claimed that the reception of these works has been influenced in large part by the long shadow which the Great War has cast over the twentieth century, and the increasing (often anachronistic) pressure for artworks of the immediate post-war period to be seen to react to the conflict in either

gritty and realist or modernist terms. While Elgar's 1919 contemporaries were able to praise the chamber music (given that the reception of the war at that time was extremely variegated and aesthetic reactions to it diverse), assessments of this kind became increasingly difficult to defend as the century wore on, particularly from the 1960s onwards, when war art became synonymous with the work of Wilfred Owen.⁸ It is only recently that such perspectives have been challenged. This is principally as a result of the expansion of modernism as an aesthetic, critical category so that works of art that were once actively or accidentally excluded from its canon can now be accommodated within it.⁹

However, as demonstrated by the Thomas poem, with which this Conclusion began, the novel-conservative/reactive-modernist aesthetic which I have been attempting to elucidate is by no means unique to Elgar, or even to music. Neither is it confined to Britain. Indeed, it may prove a fruitful aesthetic category, to be used in conjunction with the analysis of chamber works written by other contemporary composers near the end of their lives, intra- and post-war, such as Debussy's Cello Sonata (1915) and Violin Sonata (1917), as well as Fauré's Second Piano Quintet (1919–1921), Piano Trio (1923) and String Quartet (1924).

Nonetheless, I have chosen to focus on a small segment of the output of a single composer for the following two reasons: firstly, such a limited sample size has allowed me to make more definitive statements about the corpus in question and thus to avoid airy and/or unverified generalisation; secondly, this repertoire has, in my view, been unfairly marginalised and is thus in need of fresh critical attention. Analysis has been essential to this endeavour. Far from suppressing history or encouraging aesthetic solipsism, close reading has alerted me not only to the subtle interplay between tradition and individual talent in these works, but also to the world–historical ripples and welters on which these dialectical forces are buoyed along.¹⁰ More than that, however, it is my

⁸ See David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013), particularly p. xv.

⁹ For examples of this trend within musicology, which simultaneously include but go far beyond Elgar, see J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010) and James A. Hepokoski, *Sibelius, Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Tradition and individual talent is a reference to the eponymous title of an essay by T. S. Eliot. See 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1945 [1920]), pp. 47–59.

hope that the graphs provided in this thesis will allow their readers both to hear and to think about these works in new ways and, in the process, to be excited, surprised and moved by them, as I myself have been.

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