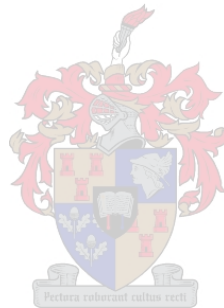


**EXPLORING DISPLACEMENT AS A THEORETICAL  
PARADIGM FOR UNDERSTANDING JOHN  
JOUBERT'S OPERA *SILAS MARNER***

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## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: 24 November 2009

## Abstract

In a world of increased mobility, a growing number of people find themselves in places other than those that they originate from. While a strong case has been made in various disciplines for the experiences of alienation and disruption emanating from the politically tinted notion of exile, this thesis argues that these experiences affect all émigrés alike, be it the consequence of forced or voluntary migration. It is this study's aim to nuance the understanding of displacement and explore the ways in which the exile discourse informs a general, less extreme discourse of voluntary displacement with specific reference to the composer John Joubert and his opera *Silas Marner*. In the first chapter, displacement is theorized as a doubleness or ambivalence that is important in understanding creative work done by those who have been displaced and that is informed, in the South African composer's case, by the relationship between the centre of 'the' art music tradition in Europe and Britain and its 'peripheral' practice in South Africa. The second chapter argues the ways that notions of nationality still inform thinking about composers and their aesthetic in a time that nationality is no longer a monolithic, stable denominator. This is done with specific reference to the composer John Joubert. In the third and fourth chapters, the focus narrows to Joubert's opera *Silas Marner* (op. 31), and explores displacement as a theoretical paradigm for reading and studying of the opera. The third chapter discusses the choice of subject matter of the opera and the significance of Eliot's novel as basis for an operatic text. Finally, the fourth chapter provides a brief analysis of the opera, its conception and reception history as well as a critical discussion of the ways in which notions of displacement is present in this work.

## Opsomming

In 'n wêreld wat meer toeganklik as ooit tevore is, bevind mense toenemend hulself in plekke elders as waar hulle vandaan kom. Terwyl die konsep van ballingskap, met sy politiese konnotasies, al deur verskeie dissiplines bestudeer en geteoretiseer is, argumenteer hierdie tesis dat die gevoel van vervreemding en ontwrigting wat daaruit spruit deur alle emigrante beleef word, synde die gevolg van willekeurige of onwillekeurige emigrasie. Hierdie studie stel homself ten doel om die begrip van ontheemding te nuanseer en die verskeie maniere waarop die ballingskapdiskoers tersaaklik is vir ontheemding, te belig. Dit sal gedoen word met spesifieke verwysing na die komponis John Joubert en sy opera, *Silas Marner* (op. 31). In die eerste hoofstuk word ontheemding geteoretiseer as 'n dubbelsinnigheid wat belangrik is in die verstaan van die ontheemde se kreatiewe werk. Die verhouding tussen die sentrum van 'die' kunsmusiektradisie in Europa en Brittanje en die 'periferale' beoefening daarvan in Suid-Afrika word as bydraend tot hierdie dubbelsinnigheid gesien. Die tweede hoofstuk argumenteer dat nasionaliteit nie meer 'n eenduidige, stabiele aspek in die beskouing van musiek en musiekeestetika verskaf nie en bedink die maniere waarop nasionaliteit steeds betrekking op musiekstudie kan hê. Dit word met spesifieke verwysing na John Joubert gedoen. In die derde en vierde hoofstukke vernou die fokus na Joubert se opera *Silas Marner* en word die wyses waarop ontheemding tot 'n lesing van die opera kan bydra verken. Die derde hoofstuk behandel die keuse van onderwerp vir die opera en die belang van Eliot se roman as operateks. Die vierde hoofstuk bespreek die ontstaans- en resepsiegeskiedenis van die opera, analiseer die opera kortliks en verskaf 'n kritiese bespreking van die wyses waarop nosies van ontheemding in die opera teenwoordig is.

## **Acknowledgments**

This thesis is the product of numerous persons' intellectual, financial and personal investments in me, for which these acknowledgments can convey but a small part of my gratitude. I would first and foremost like to thank Stephanus Muller, whose encouragement, constructive criticism, enthusiasm and copious amounts of time was invaluable to this study and my interest in musicology in general. My sincere gratitude to John Joubert, who did not spare any effort in making material available to me or answering my numerous questions, whether in person or by mail. The staff of Stellenbosch University's Music Library were unfailingly helpful in obtaining books and information, as were the archivists at the University of Cape Town's Manuscripts and Archives section during my searches through the Chisholm Papers – to them all I convey my thanks. My gratitude also to Leonore Bredekamp, whose expertise in reproducing excerpts from the opera score is much appreciated. To the Ashcroft Trust also my sincerest gratitude for their continued financial assistance that made this study possible.

I could not have wished for better personal and practical support during my travails. My family's unwavering confidence in me was a motivation during the prosperous and difficult times; my heartfelt thanks to my father Deon, my mother Beth and sister Ena. Finally, my deepest gratitude to Chris, who was a constant source of inspiration, encouragement and support.

‘But what about *outsideness*? What about all that which is beyond the pale, above the fray, beneath notice? What about outcasts, lepers, pariahs, exiles, enemies, spooks, paradoxes?’

— Sir Darius Cama, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (Salman Rushdie)

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## Introduction

*Any introduction to my life and work would have to take into account of the fact that I was born and spent the first 19 years of my life in South Africa, with all that implies in terms of the political and racial tensions which have always prevailed there. – John Joubert<sup>1</sup>*

John Joubert's evocative statement that forms the epithet for this introduction and thesis is taken from the customary 'composer's comment' that accompanies the entries in *Contemporary Composers*. After a very brief one-paragraph resumé and a selected list of works, this is the first sentence in the more lengthy discussion of Joubert's life and oeuvre. The boldness of this statement and its prominent position in the entry indeed renders it remarkable. It is difficult not to read the rest of the discussion without constantly expecting notions place and politics to assume a central role, and thus, the discussion is veritably framed by the notions evoked by the first sentence.

Amidst these expectations, it is surprising to find that Joubert had continued to live and work in England for the past six decades after his studies at the Royal Academy of Music, and had only returned to South Africa for brief visits since, the first of which was for the opera *Silas Marner*'s première in 1961 after thirteen years of absence. What promised to be a dramatic narrative of movement between places and the tensions that ensue, now appears to be a more deeply-felt, personalised sense of belonging to and deriving from a place that is more accurately characterised by absence than presence. It could thus be argued that the notion of place in Joubert's regard of his life and works was spurred by nostalgia and remembrance of South Africa rather than by active engagement with contemporary 'South Africanness'.

It seems that the presence of a place is less apposite in the discussion of John Joubert and his works than the loss of place. The spatial presence which Joubert claims to be reflected in his work is indeed not the space in which Joubert has been operating during his compositional career and the greater part of his life. The more pertinent questions to ask, it seems, is how notions of place – of being in one and (admittedly) being influenced

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<sup>1</sup> See Kenneth Birkin, 'Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)', *Contemporary Composers*, eds. B. Morton and P. Collins (London, 1992), 457.



by another where one is absent – take shape in Joubert’s works. Apart from the interesting biographical discourses it opens up, the musico-aesthetic issues also arise. How is ‘place’ audible in music and what are the specific musical elements in which something so abstract takes shape?

Turning to the many South African music discourses on the importance of place - particularly being out of place or displacement – in music, it is notable that the displacement of Joubert is markedly different from that of musicians such as Miriam Makeba or Hugh Masekela, for instance, whose life and works are almost invariably related in terms of place. Apart from the obvious differences of genres these artists practiced (and Joubert and Masekela still practices), the discourses in which Makeba and Masekela is discussed – the exile discourse and the resulting activist discourse – are unfathomable realms for a discussion of Joubert and his works. While Joubert certainly showed his condemnation of the apartheid system in a number of statements and (somewhat covert) musical references,<sup>2</sup> his situation as a voluntary émigré who accepted British citizenship by choice is vastly different to the life of exiles who were expelled from their country and accepted foreign citizenship as a result of South African authorities’ termination of their own South African citizenship.

It is clear that a nuanced discourse is necessary to accurately describe the subtler circumstances of Joubert’s displacement that nevertheless makes provision for the profound effect that dislocation has on how Joubert perceived his life and works. This is addressed in the first chapter of this thesis, which is devoted to a definition and discussion of ‘displacement’, the term I reserve for a more nuanced version or counterpart of the politically tainted discourse of exile. It takes the form of a survey of topoi that have bearing on displacement and serves to establish the ideas, contexts and terminology on which the following chapters rest. The two things that emanate from this discussion are the idea of the ‘contrapuntal’ life (plurality) and the situation-specificity of the displacement discourse – that no two instances of displacement and the plurality it entails can be the same.

After the mapping of topoi present in the displacement discourse in Chapter One, an introduction to John Joubert’s life and works necessarily draws into question the notions of nationality and identity. The issue of the contrapuntal experience of displacement, belonging to several places and having several identities, throws the idea of

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<sup>2</sup> See Stephanus Muller, ‘Protesting Relevance: John Joubert and the Politics of Music and Resistance in South Africa’, *SAMUS* 19/20 (1999/2000), 33-46.

‘national identity’ so common in biography writing into question. The discussion of John Joubert’s biography serves to thrash out the ‘national identity narrative’ in biography writing, and the relevance thereof in the age of increased mobility in the twentieth (and twenty-first) century and the life and works of Joubert. It also starts to narrow the broad focus of the first chapter to the topic at hand, namely John Joubert and finally the opera *Silas Marner*. This trend is continued in the third and fourth chapters.

The third chapter brings under investigation the socio-aesthetic choices that Joubert makes in terms of the subject matter for his opera, *Silas Marner* and the interest this has for a discussion of displacement in his works. It investigates the relationship between biographical aspects and the influence they possibly exerts on the narratives to which the composer is drawn. It then focuses on the way that Joubert adapted the text on which *Silas Marner* is based, the novel by the same title by George Eliot, to an operatic text, the writing of the libretto and the changes in meaning that the novel acquired through this appropriation.

Lastly, the biographic and aesthetic choices that Joubert has made is put into orbit with his musico-aesthetic choices, and the opera *Silas Marner* is the subject under investigation. This chapter explores the ways in which *Silas Marner* is a product of displacement discussed in the preceding chapters. It entails an account of the much-publicized controversy surrounding the commission of the opera for the Union Festival of 1960, and the subsequent rejection of *Silas Marner* for allegedly not being ‘South African’ enough. It will also trace the reception histories of the Cape Town and London productions of *Silas Marner*, which emphasize the notion of place in the interpretation of meaning in the music. Lastly and most importantly, the ways in which notions of displacement pertain to the music itself will be considered. The discussion will consider the way in which religion is de-emphasized in a narrative of redemption, the fluidity of the instrumental music of the opera as opposed to the vocal music, the problem of love and endings and the composition of sameness. The discussion of these problematic areas argues for displacement to be used as a theoretical frame in understanding Joubert’s *Silas Marner*.

To conclude the introduction, I would like to briefly refer to the title of the thesis. By exploring displacement as a paradigm that informs a reading Joubert’s opera, it is implied that the idea of displacement is mapped and that the importance of each aspect thereof with regards to music is considered. The process of exploration not only covers the

territory laid out, but also tests of the boundaries of the discourse. A part of this research is therefore to discover the possibilities of viewing *Silas Marner* as a product of the displacement discourse, which is a speculative mode of research. At times, my arguments leaned towards the boundaries of academic speculation. I considered it important to include the instances where this was the case and my comments upon reining it in, as these serve to define the discourse more clearly.

The adventurous task of exploring displacement does not only affect the narrative of individual composers' lives and works to which this topic is applicable. It indeed frames discussions of all instances of music that can be considered 'other' or 'outside', which are conditions that are especially pertinent in South Africa and indeed of any notion of crossing cultural boundaries – real or imagined. In this sense, displacement becomes an important paradigm in modern cultural expression.

## **(Dis-)placing South African Art Music**

Displacement is the condition of being out of place, caused by an abrupt movement from one location to another, resulting in an experience of dislocation and disjuncture. The prefix ‘dis-’ originates from Latin, where it means ‘separated from’, intended as the opposite of the prefixes ‘con-’ or ‘com-’ (‘with’ or ‘together with’).<sup>3</sup> ‘Displacement’ thus implies the condition of being separated from a place or being without place, a dislocation creating a sense of alienation and difference. A shift from one place to another is inextricably linked with time, which explains the displaced frame of reference that is typically divided between old and new, before and after, continuity and discontinuity, and numerous other binaries. A study about displacement would therefore involve the study of difference, skipping between places, spaces, time(s); all of which contribute to context.

Displacement denotes a condition in which not only a geographical location, but also a *sense of place*, a cultural context, is left behind. To have a ‘place’ implies the experience of ‘rootedness’, belonging and being (at) ‘home’. Displacement thus deals with the loss of a sense of belonging, being uprooted and disrupted, and dealing with the insecurity of foreignness and the difficulty of engaging with a culture and a context that is not one’s own.

But this pejorative understanding of displacement is not inevitable. Leisure travel, for example, is undertaken for the very pleasure of foreignness, novelty and anonymity – a flourishing tourism industry attests to the popularity of this particular sense of displacement. Yet travel is not a prerequisite to experience displacement. Dislocatedness is also of the here and now, of the everyday. It inheres in the crossing of class, race and social boundaries, and in the specific spatial arrangements of these boundaries in societies.

In this study, the musical artwork is regarded as a semi-autonomous structure that enables an immanent critical stance to a particular time and place (context). This Adornian image of the interconnectedness of music as work and societal context facilitates a reading of all compositional strategies born from a sense of alienation (e.g. historical, social,

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<sup>3</sup> See ‘dis-’, *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* (accessed 2 February 2008), <<http://www.oed.com>>.

chronological) as always-already critically engaged. Therefore, the contexts within which a musical work is conceived and created, and even performed and received, seep into the understanding of the musical work, and could change the function of the work in different times and places. Displacement could, at the levels of conception and creation (Nattiez's 'poietic' moments), find expression in the choice of the subject matter for an opera, for example, or the particular instrumentation of a work or the use of form. But, as Roger Scruton has convincingly argued, music could be expressive without portraying or expressing a subject.<sup>4</sup> If one likens music to a language with a semantic structure, one can say that musical expression is intransitive: an action without a subject that it plays upon. Combined with the Adornian notion of immanent criticism (i.e. readings not straying outside the structural and semantic meanings of the musical material), this notion of intransitivity makes it possible to read musical works as expressing the complexity and abstractness of displacement.

It is not surprising, then, that music has a powerful capacity for constructing place. An example of this is the vital role music plays in memory, the recollection of a particular place at a particular time.<sup>5</sup> This quality is explained by music's ability to create individual and collective boundaries, literally or figuratively, that shape the borders of that individual or collective space with notions of difference. Musical meaning could be derived from these identities, places and boundaries that people recognise within the music. This statement is equally valid for the construction of identity within a social group or within an individual and has implications for the musical material and its treatment.<sup>6</sup> Adorno touches on this when he writes that '... the composer's struggle with the material is a struggle with society precisely to the extent that society has migrated into the work ...'.<sup>7</sup> It is significant that Adorno uses the metaphor of migration in this instance to describe the relationship between music and society, thus not limiting the effects of displacement to the results of the subject's (composer's) displacement, but mapping it onto a larger epistemological phenomenon.

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<sup>4</sup> See Roger Scruton, 'Expression: The Nature of Musical Expression', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 3 April 2008), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Stokes, 'Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music', *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford, 1994), 3-6.

<sup>6</sup> It is the author's view that the construction of individual identity through music is particularly dominant in Western culture. Martin Stokes illustrates this by referring to individuals' CD collections that could reflect idiosyncratic music preferences and also set clear boundaries. *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, tr. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis, 2006), 32.

As Adorno reminds us here, music is not merely reflective of the social structures of a culture; it is a space in which culture is manipulated, negotiated and transformed.<sup>8</sup> Music, therefore, is not a static object that should only be understood within its cultural context; it is a context in itself; one in which different acts of music take place, creating more contexts.<sup>9</sup> And yet a sense of belonging in music exists and is concerned with the way in which music is used by members of cultural groups to erect boundaries around their specific local situations and, in so doing, draw distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’. These boundaries are argued for and defended by concepts of ‘authenticity’.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore possible that a sense of place, or the lack thereof, can permeate a musical work in many ways. This, in turn, might manifest in particular, recognizable musical influences or their pertinent absence. The degree to which displacement is insinuated in a composer’s style, or even a particular musical work within a composer’s oeuvre, will naturally be case-specific.

### **The vocabulary of displacement**

This study treats the term ‘displacement’ as a complex concept that implies related conditions like exile, banishment, migration, emigration, immigration and dislocation. All of these terms denote a state of being where a ‘home’ is voluntarily or involuntarily forfeited and resettlement in a different place happens in a literal or figurative manner, the latter in the case of inner-displacement. The circumstances pertaining to ‘leaving’ and ‘resettlement’ in each of these contexts are different, creating unique nuances to each situation. The term ‘exile’, for instance, is politically conditioned; it almost inevitably conjures up images of refugees in conflict with political structures. It implies, amongst other things, political banishment and the kind of authoritarian discretion overtly or discreetly allowing dissidents to flee. As will be shown later in this chapter, ‘exile’ is inadequate to describe the multi-faceted kinds of spatial disjuncture generally inhering in South African art.

‘Migration’, the word evoked by Adorno in the previous section, could be a voluntary act. Within the context of globalization, it could imply population movements

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Stokes, ‘Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music’, 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ethnicity, read in these terms, could be regarded as descriptive of categories without stipulating the content within the categories. In this sense it is not discriminatory. See Stokes, ‘Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music’, 7.

resulting from huge disparities in capital-rich Western countries and poor developing states that hold little prospect of self-improvement or decent living standards. A distinction could be made between the terms 'exile' and 'émigré'. Although it is recognised that the strict understanding of the term 'émigré' as defined above should also include the 'exile' as one of its meanings, in a study that aims to nuance the concept of displacement, it is useful to reserve the term 'émigré' for cases of non-political migration. If 'immigration' is the act of resettling in the new country, the term 'immigrant' describes a person who has accepted his/her new nationality,<sup>11</sup> who has recovered a sense of 'home' in the 'adopted' country. Lydia Goehr describes the relative meaning that 'home' acquires for the émigré or exile:

Unreflectively, 'home' names a place and a life once lived; reflectively, it names a continually transforming set of bonds organized by activities, conversations, and relationships that trace memories of the past, establish patterns of present significance, and suggest desires for the future.<sup>12</sup>

Although Goehr's essay here focuses on exile specifically, she recognizes the broader body of emigrants to whom the notion of home also has import: 'The constant questioning about the "soil of a family's existence" is no different for those who emigrate in freedom than for those who emigrate because of political exile, even if the urgency of the questioning is.'<sup>13</sup> The image of 'soil' in which a person or a family is rooted, is particularly evocative. Like plants, people thrive or suffer in different environments. Without changing genetically, the qualities of the soil affect plants to the extent that it may determine the colour of flowers, size and the quality and abundance of fruit production. The implications of this metaphor for the current discussion are clear, and although it constitutes a rather tired image, it could be extended to apply to composers who do not find conditions in their country of birth conducive to their optimal development. In these instances, an inner displacement frequently occurs, upon which the composer becomes isolated from the environment and reaches to internal resources for creative impetus.

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<sup>11</sup> Reinhold Brinkmann, 'Reading a Letter', *Driven Into Paradise: the Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999), 5 and 8.

<sup>12</sup> Lydia Goehr, 'Music and Musicians in Exile', *The Quest for Voice: Music, Politics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998), 176.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

## Displacement and exile

In short, the main difference between displacement and exile is that displacement lacks the political quality inherent in exile. Exile is informed by politics, while displacement is propelled by other incentives. This statement does not imply that displaced persons are devoid of strong political opinions, but the distinction between displacement and exile rests upon the initial motivation for relocation. This distinction between exile and displacement is, however, not commonplace. In his account of how the exile identity is created, Mark Israel illustrates how exile and displacement (in the senses defined in this study) erroneously came to be seen as synonymous among South African émigré communities in Britain in the 1960s:

South Africans in London looked around at other exile communities and saw what seemed to be particular key features: exiles had been forced out of home; and they had rallied around a political cause in exile, building their own organizations and institutions in readiness for a return ... Among the wider South African exile grouping, not every individual exile had to fit this archetype of departure, displacement and return. The identification of exile embraced a penumbra. It had to do so because only a small proportion of South Africans in Britain could fit all the categories. As a result, categories were deployed in such a way that they were loose enough to encompass people even if they had not had to leave South Africa, even if they had not spent all their time in Britain actively campaigning against apartheid, and even if it was unlikely that they would choose to return.<sup>14</sup>

It is therefore apparent that many cases of displacement in Britain, and probably elsewhere as well, have indiscriminately been labelled exile. Writings on exile can therefore be applied to displacement, not only because of certain similarities between the two conditions, but also as a rectification of previous misclassification.

Despite these overlaps, careful differentiation has to be made between the effect of exile and displacement that manifests in the degree to which disruption is experienced. The general assumption seems to be that the more calculated the emigration, the less traumatic the disruption would be. It could therefore be argued that displacement is a condition with idiosyncratic frames of reference and a unique range of emotions.

There is no shortage of studies on exile across many disciplines in the arts and humanities. Research on the topic includes the effects of exile in psychology, sociology

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<sup>14</sup> Mark Israel, *South African Political Exile in the United Kingdom* (London, 1999), 143 and 145.



and politics,<sup>15</sup> its pertinence to ancient Greek literature<sup>16</sup> and its representations in literature and the visual arts.<sup>17</sup> In fact, research on the topic of exile and displacement produces an ever expanding list of sources, books, personal accounts and films on the subject, confirming the topic's wide-ranging significance. As Edward Said rightly asserts, '[m]odern Western culture is in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, refugees'.<sup>18</sup> Indeed Said's statement also rings true for Western art music history. Musicians and composers who lived in exile or in conditions of displacement in the nineteenth century include Chopin, Liszt, Meyerbeer and Wagner. In the twentieth century studies on displacement are dominated by the migration of composers from Nazi Germany to America before and during the Second World War. Composers' names that frequent these studies are, among others, those of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Bartók, Krenek, Eisler and Weill. These studies pertain nearly without exception to exile.

South African literature also has its fair share of studies on exile inflicted especially during apartheid. In music, the topic is particularly prominent in jazz, to the extent that it could even be considered a topos. However, it remains mostly unexplored in studies of the Western art music domain, despite art music's many practitioners who study or stay in countries other than their own. Indeed, there are very few cases of exile in the political sense defined above in Western art music practice, as it was generally well-supported by the apartheid government. Notable exceptions are Stanley Glasser, who was exiled in 1963 and Hendrik Hofmeyer, who went into self-imposed exile from 1982 to 1991. The more common occurrences of voluntary displacement, frequently for tuition or career purposes, are rarely mentioned except for brief references in artists' biographies. The artists and their works' reception in different cultural circumstances in the light of a displacement discourse is a topic yet to be fully explored.

A topic closely related to displacement that has also received little attention is the effect of decolonization on Western art music in (previous) colonies, and the frequent migration of colonized artists to the 'mother country' in pursuit of higher education or

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<sup>15</sup> To name a few, see Léon and Rebeca Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*, tr. Nancy Festinger (New Haven and London, 1989); Oliver Krämer, 'No past to long for? A sociology of Chinese writers in Exile', *The Literary Field of Twentieth Century China*, ed. Michel Hockx (Surrey, 1999), 161-177; Martin Stokes (ed.), *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford, 1994), 1-28; Mark Israel, *South African Political Exile in the United Kingdom* (London, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> See Jo-Marie Claassen, *Displaced Persons: The Literature of Exile from Cicero to Boethius* (London, 1999); Nancy Sultan, *Exile and the Poetics of Loss in the Greek Tradition* (Lanham and Boulder, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> See Albert Camus, *L'étranger* (Paris, 1971); George Lamming, *The pleasures of Exile* (n.p., 1992); Milan Kundera *Ignorance*, tr. Linda Asher (London, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> 'Reflections on Exile', *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London, 2000), 173.

better opportunities. As considerably more has been written on displacement as an aspect in the creation of literature in ex-colonies, this discourse could profitably be extended and particularized to include music. Alternatively, existing studies on exile and music could be considered for their relevance to the (post)-colonial condition. The cautions that should be taken with these approaches are evident. In the case of the first, it should be clarified if and how thematic manifestations of exile in language could be extended to music. The second strategy should justify the required degree of historical elision that could obscure important historical differences between different times and places. Both of these approaches, however, open up the opportunity for the first advances in displacement and post-colonial discourses in music that could enrich our understanding of the South African musical heritage.

### **The relevance of displacement**

A study of displacement is as relevant in South Africa today as it was during various phases of political displacement in the past. The world is progressively becoming more accessible through developments in transportation and communication technologies, resulting in an increased exposure to other cultures and their practices. People also become more mobile; travel and prolonged stays in different countries are more commonplace than ever before. The result is an increase in the number of people who live outside of their native countries, original communities and collective frames of reference. In addition to real-life exposure to foreign environments, concepts such as ‘armchair travel’ illustrate how the media brings the experience of foreignness into homes (wherever that happens to be), and further stimulates a cross-fertilization of ideas and traditions between cultures. This is where the boundaries between ‘place’ and ‘space’ become blurred, as foreign influences construct a sense of place totally unrelated to the actual space (or geographical location) and its unique, indigenous cultural expressions.

In South Africa, where a multiplicity of indigenous cultures co-exists and overlaps, notions of displacement and difference (or the levelling thereof) are of particular importance. The edges of cultures become blurred as citizens and emigrants are displaced by political conditions or the pursuit of opportunities. Predominantly rural cultures become urbanized, as the existence of a genre such as Masquanda proves, and formerly deemed Western culture becomes indigenized in return, as Africanized productions of operas of European origin and setting attests to. Indeed, the practice of Western art music

itself could controversially be regarded as displaced in South Africa. Although Western art music has the oldest written history of South African musical practices, it is still a recent development relative to the oral music traditions in South Africa.<sup>19</sup>

One of art music's symptoms of displacement is its (mostly) still unfaltering reverence of the art music tradition in Europe. This is symptomatic of an enduring colonialism, with the 'centre' still informing cultural practices in the 'periphery'.<sup>20</sup> Yet the plurality that displacements cause could contribute to cultural richness and depth. In an interview with Peter Midgley, the South African poet and artist Breyten Breytenbach comments that...

... we tend to forget the other side of exile – that exile is very often a tremendous relief. Nearly every single person I've known, although he's lost a lot by having to go into exile, being deprived of his immediate environment – and sometimes of his linguistic environment and of his family – has gained enormously on the other side in terms of education, ... and broadening one's mind with travelling.<sup>21</sup>

Although Breytenbach made this comment with reference to South African political exiles on the verge of returning to the 'New South Africa' in 1992, it also rings true for many emigrants. The promises of emoluments in the new country, whether it holds true or not, ease the decision-making process to leave and recompenses the sense of loss the émigré might experience. The assertion can therefore be made that displacement is not a physical and determining condition that impacts on nearly all aspects of everyday life. Displacement more likely results in sporadic bouts of nostalgia, which is accordingly concretized in creative work at intermittent times. It is therefore reasonable to expect it not to be present in all works constituting a composer's oeuvre, although it might manifest in certain elements of particular works composed at particular times.

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<sup>19</sup> Although jazz is, similar to Western art music, also a comparatively recent development in South Africa, it has been more successfully appropriated by South Africans. One could argue that South African art music has submitted to the same transformations by introducing indigenous 'South African influences' in the works of several composers, notably that of Stefans Grové, Kevin Volans and Peter Klatzow, to name a few. The success of these transformations, however, is still debated and is generally not as readily accepted as those in jazz. South African jazz has since become a flourishing, internationally recognised and lucrative form of jazz in its own right.

<sup>20</sup> New compositional developments in Europe tardily make their appearance in South Africa, and a delayed imitation of the original trend comes into being. Many South African musicians attempt to bridge this gap by venturing to Europe, only to find that also there they do not quite belong, as they are not fully part of the 'great tradition' either.

<sup>21</sup> *Out of Exile: South African writers speak*, eds. Kevin Goddard and Charles Wessels (Grahamstown, 1992), 62-63.

In many cases, the displaced condition of South African composers living abroad is characterized by a gradual development. A typical ‘displacement biography’ would begin with studies abroad undertaken to attain greater exposure and presumed better tuition. During this time, opportunities would become apparent and available, amounting to a prolonged stay and the eventual construction of a career in the now not-so-foreign country. A point of no, or very difficult, return would soon be reached, which would mark a permanent stay in the adopted country. This was more or less the case with South African composer John Joubert, who has lived in England since 1946. His biography is no exception to this generalised account of the gradual adjustment to a new country discussed in the previous paragraph. Indeed, after building an entire career in a foreign country for 62 years, one is tempted to ask whether Joubert could still be regarded as a South African composer. In developing the complexities of displaced identity, the next section and especially the next chapter will illustrate how the discourse on displacement makes this question of nationality largely irrelevant.

### **Ambivalent Identities**

As mentioned earlier, one enters a minefield of binaries when speaking about displacement: before and after, past and present, old and new, insider and outsider, belonging and separation, loss and gain, continuity and discontinuity, and so the list continues. Most writers agree that displacement is seldom an either/or situation; that these binaries are often inseparable, since the one pole inevitably suggests its opposite. Hence it is no surprise that ‘[e]xiles are never absolutists’;<sup>22</sup> émigrés trade absolutism for ambivalence to the world. Lydia Goehr uses the image of the two sides of a coin to illustrate the ‘doubleness’ of the émigré’s disposition, where the one side can differ quite dramatically from the other and still remain two ‘faces’ of the same object.<sup>23</sup> The plurality the displaced identity assumes should not, however, be limited to only two ‘faces’. More instances of displacement would inevitably add more dimensions of pluralism.

Hermann Danuser suggests cultural ambivalence’s positive effect on artistic identity, as ‘[t]he loss of identity ... might well have as its counterpart the gaining of a new

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<sup>22</sup> I quote the word ‘exile’ with its broadly (mis-)understood meaning in mind; that it includes all conditions of displacement. Lydia Goehr, ‘Music and Musicians in Exile’, 186.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 187.

identity, produced by successful assimilation, or “acculturation”.’<sup>24</sup> The use of the word ‘counterpart’ is particularly evocative in this sentence, as it plays upon complementary, mutually negotiating and enhancing qualities.<sup>25</sup> This opaque *mélange* of cultural influences that shape the displaced composer liberates the discourse of displacement from the tendency to limit questions of identity to nationality.

Displacement suggests the cultivation of multiple identities that represent the richly varied facets of each individual’s experience. As the culture left behind increasingly reifies in the mind of the *émigré*, who is mostly isolated from the current developments in the place he has left behind, an increasing awareness of the new cultural environment starts developing. It is clear, theoretically at least, that this should lead to a certain disjuncture in the trajectory of the displaced composer’s immediate cultural heritage, which now comprises both the old and the new. The trajectory is not, however, a one-dimensional relay between the old and the new, as Edward Said argues:

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is *contrapuntal*.<sup>26</sup>

The fact that Said turns to a musical trope to describe the simultaneity of multiple experiences is significant. Clearly, music has the unique ability to portray different (independent) experiences at the same time (the essence of the *contrapuntal*), which could include the simultaneous presentation of the spaces of past and present. As a medium enabling a discourse of displacement, music is therefore rich.

The way simultaneous creative identities are negotiated and recreated will differ from one composer to another, since it is to be expected that the dimensions of plurality will be case-specific. In this sense, the displaced experience is highly individualised, an attribute that studies of displacement needs to take into account. Not least of the particularities that individualise the notion of displacement is the particular cultural media in which this plurality is transacted, its histories and the cultural possibilities and limitations that it poses. The following section will explore the notion of ‘cultural

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<sup>24</sup> Hermann Danuser, ‘The question of Musical Identity’, *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, eds. Brinkmann and Wolff (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999), 157.

<sup>25</sup> The Oxford Dictionary describes it as an ‘equivalent in a different context’ or ‘a person ... forming a natural complement to another’. See ‘counterpart’, *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* (accessed 19 March 2008), <<http://www.oed.com>>.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Said, ‘Reflections on Exile’, 186.

baggage’ and ‘cultural weight’ that inevitably accompanies the means or media through which culture is expressed and negotiated, which includes music.

### ‘Cultural weight’ or ‘cultural baggage’

In an interview with Brian Walter, Mbulelo Mzamane stated that ‘[t]o carry a language...is also to carry the excess baggage with which it comes, which is cultural’.<sup>27</sup> It could be argued that this is true of any means of cultural expression, including music. This powerful statement has profound implications for the potential meaning that music has not only in its originary cultures, but especially also in the cultures that appropriated it. All aspects and shaping forces of culture, including historical, gender, racial and cultural issues and ideologies, are therefore blueprinted in the use of music, which renders it a highly potent conveyor of cultural ideology. Of course, this becomes increasingly complex when cultural means, like music, are appropriated. Keorapetse Kgositsile explains its workings with reference to language:

...[t]o be articulate in a language means internalising, whether you like it or not, some aspects of the culture that gave birth to that language. So, we are still in the process of creating a South African English. We have to tame this [English], which we inherited from the British, to carry our cultural weight, so to speak.<sup>28</sup>

The appropriation of the *lied* in service of Afrikaner nationalism illustrates Kgositsile’s argument well within the realm of South African art music. During Apartheid, the Afrikaans art song became the vessel of Afrikaner nationalistic ideology as it was employed as a replacement for English (colonial) forms of cultural expression in the Afrikaner struggle against colonialism.<sup>29</sup> The appropriation of the *lied* for these purposes, I would like to argue, is significant (and perhaps not coincidental) in the light of the nationalistic connotations with the *lied*’s country of origin, Germany. Afrikaner nationalism could certainly find resonance with the notion of the German ‘volk’ and its ideologies of racial purity and superiority, which was then still fresh in the Afrikaner nationalistic imagination and undoubtedly provided fuel for the Afrikaner Apartheid

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<sup>27</sup> Mbulelo Mzamane interviewed by Brian Walter, *Out of Exile: South African Writers Speak*, 44.

<sup>28</sup> Keorapetse Kgositsile interviewed by Achmat Dangor, *Out of Exile: South African Writers Speak*, 83.

<sup>29</sup> Carina Venter, ‘Bodem, Culture and the Afrikaner Boereplaas’, paper presented at the annual conference of the South African Society for Research in Music, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 29 June to 1 July 2009. My thanks to Carina for making her paper available.

project. The Afrikaans art song can therefore be read not only in the light of its immediate existence and (perhaps obscure) purpose; it gains the potency of a lineage of nationalistic history and ideological connotations that necessitates a reading on multiple levels of significance. The researcher not only engages with the work itself in these instances, but with a whole history of the genre's meanings and significance. This process is ongoing and meanings are constantly negotiated as they are composed, arranged, performed, recorded, bought and listened to.

In terms of semiotics, a scholarly meeting point between language and music, these continuously negotiated contexts in which music exists indeed seeps into every aspect of Nattiez's musical work: the composer who created a work and the musical 'language', 'dialect' or idiom in which he voices his creativity form part of the poietic that sediments in the neutral phase, and received by an audience that once again listens from a particular musical paradigm.

These factors are significantly at play in the opera *Silas Marner*. John Joubert has been living in England for thirteen years by the time that the opera was commissioned. His English tertiary education and musical environment had been formative of his more mature compositional style, and yet *Silas Marner* was commissioned for a South African performance, and this knowledge certainly affected the way the work was composed. The abilities and limitations of a particular cast, venue and orchestra were indeed serious considerations in the choice of the number of characters, the voice types assigned to each role, the orchestration and many other aspects of the opera. Apart from these obvious considerations that affected the poietic and neutral phases of the work, there are also the subtler notions of nostalgia, disjuncture and ambivalence that are discernable in the work, as will be shown in later chapters of this thesis. One could therefore justly assert that the opera was conceived in a creative space between two places. The study of the opera, as will be shown in Chapter Four, attests to the disparities in the work that arguably result from the cultural ambivalence in which it was created. The eventual performance of the opera in both South Africa and England constitutes two reception histories that contributes to the richness of the opera's esthetic phase.

### **Situating South Africa within the art music tradition**

The relationship between the South African art music tradition and its European roots is in many ways analogous to that of other 'new world' countries, frequently ex-colonies. A

glance at the American art music situation could thus be informative in a discussion of South African art music in a number of ways. Particularly the musical migration from Nazi Germany to America before and during the Second World War highlights the dynamic between the ‘root’ of the art music tradition (Europe) and its ‘derivative’ (the art music tradition in the ‘new world’). Two major diachronic disjunctures can be discerned in this process: first, the much earlier displacement of the European art music tradition that took place simultaneously with the founding of America as a colony; and second, the migration of European composers before and during the Second World War to a continent whose art music traditions stemmed from the same roots centuries ago, but had meanwhile developed at a different pace and in different ways. The experiences of composers involved in the latter instance could be construed as a critique of the ‘old’ tradition on the ‘new’ at that particular point of the development of both. Whereas Miklos Rószka remarked on a peculiar absence of an inspiring atmosphere he ascribes to Europe,<sup>30</sup> Krenek felt that his art benefited from the Americans ‘lacking in historical consciousness’<sup>31</sup> that enabled him to exert greater artistic freedom in his compositions. As Maurer-Zenck comments, the advantage of practising new music in a relatively young music tradition is that the students, and presumably audiences too, are susceptible to new sounds and new ideas, and that their expectations are not restricted by a strong music tradition.<sup>32</sup>

If the American situation is compared to the South African art music tradition, similar conclusions could be drawn regarding the first disjuncture. There is little doubt that art music came to the Cape of Good Hope with European settlement, and that it existed in some form or another during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in a different (colonial) guise. Regarding the second disjuncture, the Second World War is less pivotal than the colonial relationship. In fact, the opposite would be true about South African artists’ so-called ‘migration’ to Europe and especially Britain, as many South Africans sought tertiary education or work opportunities in the country of the colonizer from the 1940s to 1960s. The sentiments of writer and human rights activist Albie Sachs could be applied to most South Africans who emigrated to Britain or Europe for those purposes:

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<sup>30</sup> See Lydia Goehr, ‘Music and Musicians in Exile’, 184.

<sup>31</sup> Claudia Maurer Zenck, ‘Challenges and Opportunities of Acculturation: Schoenberg, Krenek and Stravinsky in Exile’, *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 179.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-179.



I could immerse myself in the world and the culture and the civilization ... I was enriching myself. I was having fun. And also conquering a kind of complex I think we all have in South Africa, that there is that towering mountain of European culture. You read the *Observer* and the people are so damn intelligent and smart and they use language so beautifully and they make all these references. And we feel so puny. So now I was climbing these intellectual Matterhorns, and doing it with joy.<sup>33</sup>

By extension, the displacement of art music composers from South Africa to Europe or Britain could be construed as a journey to the ‘towering mountain’ of European music. George Lamming explains that ‘[w]hen the exile is a man of colonial orientation, and his chosen residence is the country which colonised his own history, then there are certain complications. For each exile has not only got to prove his worth to the other, he has to win the approval of Headquarters ...’.<sup>34</sup> According to Lamming, this can be ascribed to the colony’s idealization of the ‘idea’ of the ‘mother country’, which is firmly lodged in colonized minds, which leads to a feeling of inferiority among the colonized. But this idea is not exclusively the product of the colony’s imagination; it is a perception also encouraged by the coloniser. According to Brinkmann, Rózsa observed that ‘[t]he arrogance that members of the old middle European nations displayed toward the much younger culture of the United States, a nation they perceived as lacking in tradition, often lead to an exaggerated sense of artistic self-esteem.’<sup>35</sup>

It is clearly possible that the opposite of Rózsa’s observation could be posited about South African composers physically moving to the centres of the established Western art music tradition from the periphery. However, Lamming also asserts that the dynamic would differ greatly in the case of migration to another country than that of the coloniser.<sup>36</sup> An interesting South African case in point would be a composer like Stefans Grové, who studied and worked in the United States during a time in which most of his contemporaries sought education and worked in Britain. Could it be that the migration from a ‘new tradition’, such as South Africa, to another ‘new tradition’ like America would make the feeling of displacement less acute than migration to ‘Headquarters’ (to use Lamming’s term)? Certainly it is significant that of the first generation of South African composers to study abroad, Grové adopted the most ‘modern’ aesthetic and was

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<sup>33</sup> Albie Sachs interviewed by Hein Willemsse, *Out of Exile: South African Writers Speak*, 11.

<sup>34</sup> ‘The Occasion for Speaking’, *The Pleasures of Exile* (n.p., 1992), 24.

<sup>35</sup> Reinhold Brinkmann, ‘Reading a Letter’, *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> George Lamming, ‘An Occasion for Speaking’, 25.

also the first successfully to explore possible reciprocity between his Western art and his African place.

A more practical consideration in a discussion about the cultural attributes of old and young traditions is that of opportunities and funding for the arts. Writing in 1958 to a bureaucrat at the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Arnold van Wyk lamented the poor state of South Africa's cultural industry (which could retrospectively be regarded as the heyday of art music in South Africa):

Where are our publishers? Where is the film industry that makes it possible for composers to earn a few pounds by plying their trade? Where is the broadcasting corporation that frequently commissions incidental music and pays well for it? Where are the bodies (such as the British Council, for example) that make commercial recordings of our works? Or the organisation (like the Dutch 'Donemus') that assists with the copying of our manuscripts and their distribution? The composer in our country has to rely on his own resources almost exclusively. Maybe he does not deserve better, but then no one can accuse him if he says that his own country and people do not want him.<sup>37</sup>

The imbalances at stake between the 'old' and 'new' worlds are clearly not limited to 'cultural capital'. From this letter it is obvious that Van Wyk feels betrayed by South Africa for not providing the means to help South African composers. Indeed, Van Wyk studied and worked in Britain from 1938 to 1946, returned to South Africa and, approximately at the time this letter was written, was seriously considering returning. And yet Van Wyk was happy neither in South Africa nor England. Stephanus Muller describes him as 'a composer whose sense of belonging was always deferred to the place where he was not. While this might have been less evident during periods of his stay in London, and at times in South Africa, it is an ever-present undercurrent that could well be theorized as the most debilitating condition of the colonial composer.'<sup>38</sup> It is therefore entirely possible that the institutional marginalization of South African art music composers in South Africa – even by a political and social regime that professed support for it – contributed to a

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<sup>37</sup> Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author: 'Waar is ons uitgewers? Waar is die rolprentbedryf wat dit vir ons kan moontlik maak om deur die beoefening van ons vakmanskap, 'n paar pond te verdien? Waar is die uitsaai-korporasie wat gereeld opdragte vir bykomstige musiek uitreik en behoorlik daarvoor betaal? Waar is die liggaam (soos die British Council, byvoorbeeld) wat ons werke kommersiëel laat opneem? Of die organisasie (soos die Nederlandse 'Donemus') wat ons help met die kopiëer [*sic.*] van ons manuskripte en hulle verspreiding? Die komponis in ons land moet byna uitsluitlik op hulle eie kragte steun. Miskien verdien hy nie beter nie, maar niemand kan hom dit kwalik neem as hy sê dat sy land en sy volk hom nie wil hê nie'. Arnold van Wyk in a letter to Thys van Lille, 5 September 1958, Documentation Centre, J.S. Gericke Library, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

<sup>38</sup> Stephanus Muller, 'Arnold van Wyk's Hard, Stony, Flinty Path, or Making Beautiful Things in Apartheid South Africa', *The Musical Times* 149: 1905 (2008), 70.

sense of restriction and even paralysis that in turn fed into a feeling of inferiority in the ‘colonial’ composer’s sense of himself in the European centres of culture. Although clearly not as dramatic and obvious as the displacement of figures exiled for their political beliefs, this perspective even suggests that the displaced condition of the South African art music composer (including John Joubert) could be all the worse for its subtlety. A cultural inferiority in one place is fed by institutional indifference in another.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter surveyed the issues that pertain to the South African displacement discourse and developed its complexities, which allows the following chapters to bring the discussion into focus by referring to John Joubert and the opera *Silas Marner* specifically. It has theorized the concept ‘displacement’ as one that is inherent in the creative lives of those who ‘change places’ during their lifetimes, be it literally or figuratively. It has argued that many of the effects of terms like ‘exile’ could be attributed to general kinds of displacement, and that the doubleness or ambivalence that ensues is important in understanding creative work done by those who have been displaced. If a quick survey of the most important South African composers is done, very few would justify the description ‘exile’, for political incentive for their stay in another country almost inevitably lacks. The nature of temporary or permanent relocation to another country is for most composers educational or work-related, yet their experience of foreignness in their own country or another is no less profound than that experienced by exiles. The interaction between art music composers and South African indigenous music traditions through hybrid works could also hardly be described in terms of exile, while an argument about displacing South African art music whilst also displacing indigenous music – that is, using them both in different contexts – accounts for many elements arising from their interaction. Exile is thus a limited and limiting concept within a cultural plethora such as South Africa, while displacement casts the net wider and is therefore more inclusive and instructive as a South African condition. Music stemming from cross-cultural encounters even within the art music tradition, such as is the case with *Silas Marner*, benefits from this nuanced conception of being out of place. The displacement discourse opens a new paradigm in which not only art music, but all forms of cross-cultural music can be fruitfully explored; albeit that this is not the only paradigm in which these musical efforts are significant or open to analysis.

A discussion of displacement is currently as relevant in South Africa as it was in the various phases of displacement during Apartheid. In a dynamic, multicultural environment, an inevitable political tincture clings to the space of cultural expression – the boundaries that it creates or surmounts; the sense of belonging that it creates or defies. Too frequently, cultural labels are still assumed especially in retrospective discussions of various music genres, which obscures many important similarities between them, such as their abilities to voice common human experiences of loss, negotiations of multiple identities and challenge the constrictions that various aspects pose, but also tends to oversimplify the particularities of each genre, such as the notion that all art music stems from and endorse the white regime that funded it, and that all black music was devoted to themes of protest. While these are sometimes valid generalisations to suppose, a liberation of the displacement discourse from its struggle connotations within the struggle discourse will enable differentiation of some ideological orthodoxies in the South African cultural discourse. The rather tired reading of pro- or anti-apartheid, -colonial, -Westernisation or -Africanisation ideologies limits the music discourse to generalised conclusions that does not serve to broaden our understanding of culture, its practitioners or its works. Only when these mental shifts occur will it be possible for cultural diversity to gain independence of its polarized racial past. In this liberated discourse, displacement offers the possibility of theorizing collective experience.

### **On John Joubert's place and nationality**

Every music dictionary, encyclopaedia or reference work considers it an imperative to mention a composer's nationality – in fact, it is considered so important that it appears right after the composer's date of birth (and death). The knowledge of a composer's nationality is clearly intended immediately to evoke a context that becomes the lens through which biography is understood. This context, in turn, relies on the reader's knowledge of musical style, history and other composers' biographies, amongst others, to contextualize the (national) context, as it were. It is thus somehow assumed that something of the place, and by implication its culture, is of some relevance in a composer's works, and even indicative of a certain musical aesthetic or aesthetic expectation (which becomes even more significant if the expectation is frustrated). But why is such high priority accorded nationality, country and place as 'historical facts'?

The inextricability of composers' personal lives, anchored in geo-political understandings of these lives, has been generally accepted in music-historical writing. Nationality vies with other tropes frequenting subject entries in reference works, such as genealogies of teachers and pupils, the tracing of musicality in families, etc. But how could 'place' as a category or historical context become instructive or explanatory? Place assumed importance to articulate a concept such as 'Viennese classicism' that has grouped together significantly different composers (Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven) under banners like the 'use of rhythm, particularly harmonic rhythm, to articulate large-scale forms', or 'use of modulation to build longer arches of tension and release'.<sup>39</sup> Periodizations according to nationality (time linked to place) such as the 'Italian' baroque, 'German' romanticism and 'French' impressionism are other examples of how place is believed to inform practice. Whereas one explanation could point to the restricted dissemination of compositional trends preceding different phases of European expansionism, it is worth pointing out that some individuals did travel widely, thus problematizing the connection of their style with a place. A case in point is Handel who travelled to and settled in England,

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<sup>39</sup> See Daniel Hertz and Bruce Alan Brown, 'Classical: The Viennese "Classical" idiom', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 October 2008), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

or Mozart, who travelled relatively extensively in Europe and whose music boasts the broad musical exposure his travels afforded him. In the nineteenth century, traversing boundaries became more commonplace; the notion of *wanderlust* becoming a veritable topos in music, as Schubert's *Der Wanderer*, Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage* or Wagner's *Parsifal* confirm. Yet, in these historical contexts, nationality was still considered a fairly stable and relevant denominator of a composer's music. The nineteenth century, in particular, was concerned with place even as its artists became interested in places other than their own.

In the twentieth century, however, it becomes increasingly problematic to imply that nationality could somehow be 'descriptive' (or even 'prescriptive') of a particular musical idiom. The increased mobility of individuals, groups and even whole nations has rendered the concept 'place' of dubious significance. Pinning down a composer's nationality and its significance is more complicated than ever. Descriptions such as 'Russian composer, later of French (1934) and American (1945) nationality' in the case of Stravinsky or 'Austrian composer active in the USA' in the case of Erich Korngold<sup>40</sup> illustrate how unstable and open-ended nationality as a point of reference has become. A single place in the twentieth century, for example Darmstadt, no longer denotes a particular regional aesthetic (as was the case with Mannheim in the early eighteenth century, say), but the converging of diverse nationalities around a particular form of musical expression that is neither national nor context bound to place in the way Salzburg was in Mozart's day, for example.

There is a danger of scripting the 'loss of place' or problematic of nationality as a teleological process. To avoid this, the notion of increased mobility or 'globalization' should perhaps be qualified. As Daniel Mato stresses, 'globalization' is not a new phenomenon, but has been present throughout the world's history. What differentiates present-day globalization from previous manifestations thereof is the degree of awareness of the world as a whole, or, as Mato puts it, 'a consciousness of globalization.'<sup>41</sup> While an awareness of globality might signal to some a merger of identities and eventual loss of national identity, it does not inevitably result in homogenization on the level of the nation state. In geo-political terms, difference is alive and well, still providing the fuel for some

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<sup>40</sup> See Stephen Walsh, 'Stravinsky, Igor (Fyodorovich)' and Brendan G. Carroll, 'Korngold, Erich Wolfgang' respectively, *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 October 2008), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

<sup>41</sup> Daniel Mato, 'On the Making of Transnational Identities in the Age of Globalization', *Identities: Race, Class, Gender and Nationality*, eds. Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Malden and Oxford, 2003), 283-4.

of the most pressing and controversial political and foreign policy actions of our time. In fact, one could argue the opposite fairly easily: that an increased awareness of the ‘other’ enunciates aspects of self more clearly. Place and nationality, the argument could continue, become more pronounced through the very fact of their contestation. However, this represents only one side of the view on nationality and the awareness of identity that it implies. Stating the other side, Radhakrishnan asserts that ‘...in our times...the dominant paradigm of identity has been the “imagined community” of nationalism.’<sup>42</sup>

This study will aim to clarify how belonging to a place or having a particular nationality is still important in understanding creative and aesthetic processes. It stands to reason that this importance will be different to the kind of importance it held a century or more ago. As this study is concerned with displacement, the significance of place and nationality becomes of particular interest where the place of the aesthetic process is different to the place of origin, where nationality no longer denotes belonging to a community, society, nation and country that one lives in. The notions of place and nationality are thus probed negatively; their significance is read from an exploration of conditions where they are absent. A closer look at the case of John Joubert sheds light on an exemplary twentieth-century instance of displacement and the implications thereof on nationality as a factor in the musico-aesthetic process.

### **A life between South African and England**

Grove Music Online starts its entry on John Pierre Herman Joubert with the following information: ‘(b Cape Town, 20 March 1927). British composer of South African origin.’<sup>43</sup> Indeed Joubert was born and raised in Plumstead, Cape Town, attended the Diocesan College (now known as Bishops Diocesan College) and started his tertiary education at the South African College of Music before permanently relocating to Britain in 1946 and accepting British citizenship in 1961.<sup>44</sup> In an interview Joubert has explained

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<sup>42</sup> R. Radhakrishnan, ‘Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity’, *Identities*, 314.

<sup>43</sup> Ernest Bradbury and Andrew Burn, ‘Joubert, John’, *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 April 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

<sup>44</sup> See Daniel Geldenhuys, ‘John Joubert se komposisies’ (DMus thesis, Stellenbosch University, 1976), 6-13. Geldenhuys’s dissertation is the only source that documents extensive research on John Joubert’s life and especially his compositions. While it is acknowledged that a need exists for a more updated study of Joubert’s works, it is outside the scope of this study to address that need. The author is therefore obliged to use Geldenhuys’s study as a point of departure, and supplement it wherever possible with other and/or more recent sources.

that his mother was of Dutch and his father of French Huguenot descent.<sup>45</sup> Geldenhuys writes that Joubert's parents were initially Afrikaans-speaking and members of the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>46</sup> Joubert recounts that

...like many sort of Cape Afrikaner families we were English-speaking. When the Cape became an English colony, our respective families, I suppose, simply adopted English as their primary language and continued as sort of honorary English people. This is the whole complexity of the colonial situation, of course. Through family background I became familiar with reading English books, reading English periodicals and so on and as far as my school background is concerned again it was a very English style...upbringing. The situation really continued until I left the Diocesan College in 1944.<sup>47</sup>

'The situation', however, seems to have continued long after 1944. In 1945 Joubert continued the compositional studies he had embarked upon three years earlier with W.H. Bell at the South African College of Music. The influence of British choral music to which Joubert was introduced by the music director of the Diocesan College, Dr Brown, was thus perpetuated by a proponent of the British compositional tradition W.H. Bell.<sup>48</sup> The Performing Right Scholarship, awarded to Joubert in 1946, subsequently enabled him to study at the Royal Academy of Music, after which he remained in England as a composer and lecturer. He retired from his position as Reader of Music at Birmingham University in 1986, and still lives in Moseley, a village outside Birmingham. The so-called 'situation' of 'Englishness', referred to in his interview with Muller, thus became a state of existence. Indeed it could be argued that Joubert is an English composer who happened to be born in South Africa and whose predominantly English colonial environment in South Africa enabled a smooth transition to England and its culture and society. Yet this would be a misrepresentation of the composer and the convictions embedded in his works and statements. Certainly the fact that he had an anglicized upbringing eased his relocation to Britain – Joubert's relocation is hardly comparable to a similar experience of, for instance, a non-English speaker – but as a study that is concerned with a nuanced definition of

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<sup>45</sup> John Joubert in an unpublished personal interview with Stephanus Muller (12 January 2001). I am grateful to Stephanus Muller who kindly made this interview available to me.

<sup>46</sup> See 'John Joubert se komposisies', 6.

<sup>47</sup> Stephanus Muller's interview with John Joubert.

<sup>48</sup> Bell's aesthetic was decidedly Romantic, as Joubert asserts: 'He belonged very much to the more romantic English tradition, people like Arnold Bax and to a certain extent, I suppose, Delius.' It is thus apparent that Joubert received a very conservative early composition education for his time. By the time he left for London, the most 'modern' works Joubert had heard were works by Mahler and the early ballets of Stravinsky. Information obtained from Stephanus Muller's interview with Joubert.



displacement and its implications, there is an interesting case to be made that this was not an entirely seamless transition.

When Joubert arrived in London to commence his studies in 1946, it must have been a devastating experience – one can imagine a situation very different from the picture his mother was sure to have evoked with accounts from the time when she studied in London in the early 1920s.<sup>49</sup> In addition to moving to a place scarred by war from relatively insulated South Africa, Joubert soon found out that the Performing Right Scholarship merely provided the *means* for his study at the Royal Academy of Music, and had not arranged the formalities of his acceptance at the Academy or even notified the appropriate authorities of his arrival. Joubert recounts that he was thus left to his own devices to find his feet as well as a supervisor for his studies.<sup>50</sup> He commenced composition classes with Theodore Holland, which soon appeared to be an unhappy collaboration.<sup>51</sup> After the Holland's death in 1947, Joubert continued his compositional studies with Howard Ferguson,<sup>52</sup> a tutorship that was clearly productive considering that Joubert won the Royal Philharmonic Prize with his *Symphonic Study in B minor* in 1949, as well as the Frederick Corder Prize with *Hymn to the Nativity* (composed in 1947, revised in 1948).

John Joubert's reputation continued to grow steadily after the completion of his studies in 1950. His first String Quartet (op. 1) was performed at the London Contemporary Music Centre in 1951 and received good reviews in the press. Most significantly, however, Novello publishers acquired the manuscript for publication and thereby established a long relationship as principle publisher of Joubert's works that lasts to this day.<sup>53</sup> Another definitive moment for the young composer was when he won the Novello Anthem Competition with his choral work *O Lorde, the Maker of Al Thing* (op. 7b).<sup>54</sup>

During this time, Joubert was a lecturer at Hull University in Yorkshire and had recently married Mary Litherland, who was a fellow student at the Royal Academy of Music. Geldenhuys states that 'Joubert himself likened the period of twelve years that he

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<sup>49</sup> Geldenhuys reports Joubert's mother, Aimée Joubert (née De Smit) to have studied piano in London under the tutelage of Harriet Cohen in the early 1920s. See Geldenhuys, 'John Joubert en sy komposisies', 6.

<sup>50</sup> Information regarding Joubert's commencement of his studies at the RAM was obtained in a personal interview with John Joubert in Moseley, Birmingham (22 July 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Geldenhuys, 'John Joubert se komposisies', 9.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>54</sup> See Kenneth Birkin, 'Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)', *Contemporary Composers*, eds. B. Morton and P. Collins (London, 1992), 455.

spent in Hull with Haydn's residence at the court of Esterházy. The relative isolation of Hull...afforded him the opportunity to develop a more personal style in his composition.<sup>55</sup> Of his period at Esterháza, Haydn is quoted by Webster as saying that '[a]s head of an orchestra I could try things out, observe what creates a [good] effect and what weakens it, and thus revise, make additions or cuts, take risks. I was cut off from the world, nobody in my vicinity could upset my self-confidence or annoy me, and so I had no choice but to become original.'<sup>56</sup> Webster comments after the quote that 'he [Haydn] belonged to no school and acknowledged few if any models.' While Joubert certainly does not belong to a particular school of composition, his works from this period show evidence of the influence of other composers as 'models', as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. The choir Joubert conducted during his time at Hull, however, seems to have afforded Joubert similar benefits to those experienced by Haydn with the orchestra in his charge. This would undoubtedly have aided the development of Joubert's choral composition technique – a genre that became a major part of Joubert's output and for which he is particularly recognized.<sup>57</sup>

Geldenuys writes that after Joubert's relocation to Birmingham in 1962, where he was appointed as lecturer at the Barber Institute for Fine Arts, his compositions began to 'appear more mature and [contain] more personal elements.'<sup>58</sup> If Geldenuys can be believed, Joubert's efforts to hone his distinctive compositional voice in the relative isolation of Hull thus seems to have settled into a more mature style after his relocation to Birmingham, indicating a compositional change that mirrors his change in place. Another change of place of a more figurative nature was, however, also effected in during this time.

John Joubert accepted British citizenship soon after his return from South Africa in 1961, where he attended the première of his first large-scale opera, *Silas Marner* (the circumstances surrounding the commission and performance of the opera is discussed in

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<sup>55</sup> It is poignant that Joubert's development as composer was profoundly influenced by the times that he was in isolation; indeed, Joubert took up composition when he was quarantined for six weeks after his sister contracted scarlet fever at the age of fifteen. 'John Joubert se komposisies', 12.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Haydn quoted by James Webster, 'Haydn, Joseph: Style, aesthetics, compositional method', ed. L. Macy, (Accessed 11 October 2008), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>>.

<sup>57</sup> According to Bradbury and Burn, '...his [Joubert's] contribution to the British choral tradition has proved central to his achievement.' See Ernest Bradbury and Andrew Burn, 'Joubert, John', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 April 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>. Birkin states of Joubert's vocal music that '...Joubert has never ceased to be active in the vocal field and is, perhaps, the most significant composer on the English cathedral and church music scene...' Kenneth Birkin, 'Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)', *Contemporary Composers*, eds. B. Morton and P. Collins (London, 1992), 458.

<sup>58</sup> Geldenuys, 'John Joubert se Komposisies', 13.

detail in Chapter 4).<sup>59</sup> This was his first visit to South Africa since he left for England in 1946. The personal importance of his return to his country of origin is apparent from Joubert's letters to Erik Chisholm. When Chisholm asked Joubert about the possibility of commissioning *Silas Marner* and a visit to South Africa, Joubert responded enthusiastically: 'A visit to South Africa – [o]f course it goes without saying that this would be the greatest pleasure for me, and if I can bring Mary and the two kids, so much the better.'<sup>60</sup> The visit was, however, financially impossible for the family unless some employment could be offered Joubert whilst in South Africa to help with the expenses.<sup>61</sup> No further mention was made of travel arrangements or funding for Joubert to attend the première of *Silas Marner*, although he lamented the prospect of his absence from the première in three letters to Chisholm.<sup>62</sup> Finally, a month before the performances were due, Joubert seemingly took the initiative for travel arrangements and expenses, for he notified Chisholm of his decision to visit South Africa for the première:

...I have decided to make it [the première of *Silas Marner*] the occasion of paying my long-deferred visit to the Cape, and my family, and I hope to be there from May 10<sup>th</sup> till May 27<sup>th</sup>. This will give me the opportunity of attending the last few rehearsals, and the première on the 20<sup>th</sup>. I needn't tell you how much I look forward to being able to be present at this – for me – very important occasion.

While the wording of the letter might seem sober and relatively unemotional, the tone in Joubert's writing is more resolute and determined compared to his previous letters, that document increasingly eager inquiries about the progress of the rehearsals, developments with the press releases and arrangements for press reviews of the premières after the completion of the opera in July 1960. Joubert's resolve to visit South Africa in order to attend the première of his opera seems to have restored his sense of participation in his 'labour of love',<sup>63</sup> as he described *Silas Marner*, and eased an apparent apprehension at its performance in his absence. In a strange way, therefore, *Silas Marner* became the work

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from John Joubert to Erik Chisholm (7 February 1959), BC 129 25.189 2(2), University of Cape Town Archive, Cape Town. Unless otherwise specified, all correspondence referred to in this thesis is taken from the Erik Chisholm Papers at the Manuscripts and Archive section of the University of Cape Town Library, Cape Town, collection number 129. I am grateful to the University of Cape Town's Archive, who made the correspondence between John Joubert and Erik Chisholm available. Permission for its use was kindly granted by John Joubert.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> See Joubert's letters to Chisholm (28 July 1960), BC 129 23.172.24; (29 September 1960), BC 129 23.172.25 and (8 April 1961), BC 129 23.172.32.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from John Joubert to Erik Chisholm (28 July 1960), BC 129 23.172 24.

that allowed Joubert (literally) to journey ‘home’ for the first time since he left South Africa, while South Africa infused his experience of *Silas Marner* with a sense of expectation and excitement. Pivoting in both directions, Joubert’s historical *Silas Marner* functioned as a connection between the home that was and the adopted home.

*Silas Marner* was, however, also pivotal in another respect. Joubert and Chisholm’s correspondence seldom crossed the border between their professional and personal lives; it was usually restricted to the business at hand.<sup>64</sup> It is thus difficult to establish Joubert’s personal sentiments at the prospect of returning to South Africa after residing in England for fifteen years. Upon his return to England, however, Joubert accepted British citizenship. Whether this decision was a response to what he had experienced in South Africa, or something he had planned all along, remains unknown. However, Birkin suggests causality between Joubert’s acceptance of British nationality and the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960 when he states that ‘[t]hough manifestly under the spell of his homeland, he [Joubert] took British nationality after the Sharpeville massacre, to whose victims the Second Symphony is dedicated.’<sup>65</sup>

Joubert’s professional career prospered in Birmingham, as his promotions to senior lecturer (1962) and subsequently to Reader in Music (1968) show. He additionally served as conductor of the University of Birmingham Motet Choir as well as the University’s orchestra.<sup>66</sup> Except for references to Joubert’s professional activities, very little is known of his life in the time between his relocation to Birmingham and his retirement in 1986. Of the compositions originating from this period, Birkin writes:

In the 1970s a new, authoritatively Joubertian voice is apparent. *Six Poems by Emily Borntë*, born of established mastery in practically every genre, are clearly of catalytic import...These songs, imaginative settings whose technical means define an artistic vision of deep compassion and concern for the human condition, patently crystallise the mature elements of his style...The 1980’s have witnessed an upsurge of creative energy in which Joubert’s instinctive, fluent musicality is tempered by a formidable concentrative power.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, Joubert’s compassion for the human condition is evident throughout his compositional career and could even be regarded as a moral imperative in Joubert’s

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<sup>64</sup> A notable exception is the two men’s outrage at the dispute about the commission of *Silas Marner*, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>65</sup> See Birkin, ‘Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)’, 458.

<sup>66</sup> See Geldenhuys, ‘John Joubert se komposisies’, 13-14.

<sup>67</sup> See Kenneth Birkin, ‘Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)’, 458.

creative work (a point that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). Joubert remains remarkably productive after his retirement, as is evident from the recently completed oratorio *The Wings of Faith* that crowned the series of performances of Joubert's works in celebration of his eightieth birthday in 2007. His late style is perhaps one, to use Edward Said's words, that 'crown[s] a lifetime of aesthetic endeavour', in contrast with a 'deliberately unproductive productiveness'.<sup>68</sup>

### **A musical voice between South Africa and England**

It is apparent from Joubert's oeuvre that he is a versatile composer who has contributed to the repertoire of most genres. His instrumental works include, amongst others, two symphonies, concertos for viola, bassoon, violin and piano, four string quartets, a string trio and piano trio, a brass quintet, two piano sonatas, as well as works for organ, cello and recorder. To this already extensive list of works is added the greater body of vocal works, including oratoria, cantatas, hymns, anthems, motets, song cycles, carols and the stage works, of which three are large scale operas.<sup>69</sup> The image emanating from his work list is one of a fairly conservative composer relative to his twentieth-century environment; one who continued to compose in recognizable forms like sonata, symphony, cantata, motet or song cycle for set instrument and/or voice groups. Although Joubert's treatment of these genres shows some innovation, his continued use of known forms renders his works particularly accessible to most audiences – an attribute that most avant-garde compositions prior to the 1980s lack.

In addition to Joubert's versatility as a composer and the accessibility of his works, Bradbury and Burn remark that 'Joubert's skill in writing to immediate requirements accounts for the number of commissions he has received.'<sup>70</sup> The diversity of the commissioned works that he has composed attests to this statement: his Second Symphony was written for the Royal Philharmonic Society, *The Choir Invisible* for the Halifax Choral Society's fiftieth anniversary, the two-act school opera *The Prisoner* was commissioned for the four hundredth anniversary of the Queen Elizabeth I Grammar School for Boys and the orchestral work *In Memoriam, 1820* commissioned by the South

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<sup>68</sup> Edward Said, 'Thoughts on Late Style', *London Review of Books*, 26:15 (2004), 3.

<sup>69</sup> See Geldenhuys, *John Joubert se komposities*, 140-167 and Birkin, 'Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)', *Contemporary Composers*, 455-457.

<sup>70</sup> See Ernest Bradbury and Andrew Burn, 'Joubert, John', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macey (Accessed 16 April 2007), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

African Broadcasting Commission for Settlers' Day in 1962. While the advantages of commissioned works for composers are evident – a guaranteed performance of the work, financial benefits and publication possibilities – the frequent commissions Joubert receives are of special significance in his case, as they provide the composer with the means to '[satisfy] a self-expressed need to play an intelligible musical role in the community.'<sup>71</sup> And how better to serve one's community than by composing music for specific social occasions? This need to serve stops short of a moral imperative, which will be returned to later in this chapter. For now, however, it is important to note the importance to the Joubert of a reciprocity between composer and community.

This reciprocity is already apparent in Joubert's adolescence, where his education at an Anglican school was formative of his dominant interest in vocal and choral music. Joubert comments: '...I was educated at an Anglican church school where I was introduced to the riches of English music and the Anglican choral tradition. This perhaps explains why so much of my output has been either vocal or choral.'<sup>72</sup> Joubert's interest in vocal music is indeed complemented by his considerable interest in literature that, according to Geldenhuys, was already apparent at school level<sup>73</sup> but goes back even further to Joubert's father, who Joubert described as 'a tremendous reader.'<sup>74</sup> Joubert's discerning literary taste is evident in his selection of poems by Hardy, Lawrence, Brontë for vocal compositions' texts, as well as novels like *Jane Eyre*, *Under Western Eyes* and *Silas Marner* as operatic subject-matter. As a continuation of Joubert's already-awakened interest in English music and an exploration of his newly adopted 'home', Joubert made a study of early Elizabethan music upon his arrival in England. Birkin notes that '[t]he subtle rhythmic counterpoints, so distinctive a feature of the English Madrigal School, contributed to his vocal/rhythmic style...'<sup>75</sup> But not only did his adopted country, England, influence Joubert's works; his debt to his South African roots is also discernable in works such as *African Sketchbook*, *South of the Line*, or the Second Symphony. Joubert states that

[t]hough I have lived in England continuously since first coming here to study, the influence on my music of my early background can still be felt, not only in its clarity of outline – a result, perhaps, of early exposure to African sun and sky – but also in the choice of some of its subject-matter,

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<sup>71</sup> Kenneth Birkin, 'Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)', 458.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> See 'Joubert se komposisies', 6.

<sup>74</sup> John Joubert's interview with Stephanus Muller.

<sup>75</sup> Kenneth Birkin, 'Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)', 458.

notably in the Second Symphony of 1970, dedicated to the victims of Sharpeville, or in the more recent *South of the Line*, which sets poems by Thomas Hardy on the subject of the Anglo-Boer War.<sup>76</sup>

South Africa is thus, according to the composer himself, present in his work in the construction of the music itself or the *form*, as alluded to in the vague phrase ‘clarity of outline’, and *content*, as indicated by the music’s subject-matter. In a paper titled ‘John Joubert in Historical Perspective’,<sup>77</sup> Geldenhuys uses both these arguments to make a case for Joubert’s sustained ‘South Africanness’ in spite of his long absence from his country of birth:

Having spent the first two decades of his life on African soil, many influences of the Continent of Africa can still be seen and felt in the music of Joubert. These influences are not only related to the choice of texts or motivic material, but are also reflected in the musical portrayal, be it more than often subconsciously, of the wide-open horizons or majestic mountain ranges often encountered in South Africa. A number of his works deal directly with an African theme, for example the Symphony No. 2, op. 68; African Sketchbook, op. 66; Gong-Tormented Sea, op. 96; South of the Line, op. 109; and the opera In the Drought, op. 17.<sup>78</sup>

This statement is followed by the heading ‘Analysis of a representative work by John Joubert’, under which Geldenhuys embarks on a discussion of *South of the Line*. The relevance of this particular example to Geldenhuys’s argument is undeniable, but this is hardly a representative work by John Joubert. Considering the latter’s output, the works with an overt South African content are in the minority.<sup>79</sup> Another difficulty with Geldenhuys’s argument is how exactly motivic material or musical portrayal is ‘South African’ in a formal sense. As Stephanus Muller points out in his article on John Joubert’s Second Symphony, the borrowed South African themes in the work are portrayed in such a manner that it conveys no distinct ‘South African’ sound image.<sup>80</sup> Against this background, it is of significance that Joubert claims that ‘the [South African] influence on

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> This unpublished paper was presented at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of the Musicological Society of Southern Africa, held 4 to 5 September 1997 at the University of Stellenbosch, as reported by Winfried Lüdemann, ‘Report from Stellenbosch: 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress, Musicological Society of Southern Africa, 4-5 September 1997’, *Current Musicology*, 62 (1997), 118-124. This unpublished paper was made available to the present author by Stephanus Muller.

<sup>78</sup> D.G. Geldenhuys, ‘John Joubert in Historical Perspective’.

<sup>79</sup> Stephanus Muller makes this point in ‘Protesting Relevance: John Joubert and the Politics of Music and Resistance in South Africa’, *SAMUS* 19/20 (1999/2000), 33.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 33-46.

my music of my early background can still be felt' (as quoted earlier in this chapter, see p. 32). The significance of this statement (and its poignance), perhaps lies in the fact that this 'feeling' is more prominent in how the composer imagines his work than perceptible to listeners.

But perhaps there is another part of Joubert as composer that is more indicative of his double identity as both a South African and English composer. The issue of Joubert's relationship with the so-called '(great) tradition' of Western art music, the present writer should like to argue, is more telling of the composer's relationship to nationality and a national identity than the 'South African' form or content of his musical works. Highlighting the centre-to-periphery relationship dominant in discussions of colonial composers' journey to the 'home country' of the Western art music practice, Birkin writes:

John Joubert's journey to England in 1946 was virtually a pilgrimage and London the Mecca where, in direct contrast to the musical isolation of South Africa, he was able to deepen his knowledge of, and to participate in, the European Tradition.<sup>81</sup>

Paradoxically, this view of the colonial nature of Western art music regards the artist's migration from the cultural 'periphery' to 'centre' as a homecoming, while at the same time also signalling a loss of place. Birkin imagines 'the European Tradition' as a monolithic entity located only in Europe (and, to a lesser degree in Britain), with former colonies looking towards the Tradition for inspiration, aspiring to it and always falling short of attaining it. Those colonials privileged enough to travel to Europe are honoured finally to form part of it. This, one would imagine, is the colonial's ultimate ambition: to overcome the isolation/difference and be a part of the Tradition. It stands to reason, then, that this will always be the colonial's undoing, for his European counterpart has always, automatically, been heir to the Tradition by the sheer merit of being European (or British). Joubert was not oblivious to the hierarchy of the art music tradition upon his coming to England. Referring to his voyage from South Africa to England in 1946, Joubert remarks:

It seemed to me that Europe with its great cultural history, its 'monuments of unageing intellect', could offer a young composer from a secondary (ie. colonial) culture an opportunity to work within

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<sup>81</sup> Kenneth Birkin, 'Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)', 458.



an ancient but still living tradition; to be able to speak at first hand to both ‘the multitude and the few’.<sup>82</sup>

What emanates from this quote is the heightened reverence for the historical aspect of the ‘Tradition’. What the composer from the ‘secondary’ culture ‘hears’ in Europe, is, above all, history. Perhaps this is what Mellers meant when he wrote about Joubert’s nostalgia for ‘a Britain and Europe that are rapidly transformed.’<sup>83</sup> This argument is supported by the fact that, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Joubert only had limited exposure to twentieth-century compositions during his studies in South Africa under W.H. Bell (see footnote 48, p. 26).

It may well be that the art music practices in places other than Europe could come to be regarded as practices in their own right, not lesser versions of an imagined ‘original’.<sup>84</sup> The present author should like to propose a model of European and ‘colonial’ art music practices in which the ‘peripheral’ art music practice originally stems from its European counterpart and adopts the history and collective consciousness of European practice. In countries settled by Europeans, like South Africa, it is then conceivable that the ‘peripheral’ art music practice gains its independence from that of the ‘centre’ in terms of direction and speed of development. In this conception of the relationship between ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’, a composer like John Joubert could be regarded as born both into and outside the great ‘Tradition’, as having to negotiate continually the disjuncture between the direction and historical consciousness of his ‘colonial’ aesthetic and that of the metropolis. In this model, so-called ‘South African’ works like *In Memoriam, 1820*, *African Sketchbook*, *South of the Line* or the Second Symphony become less significant as markers of intersections between the English composer and his South African heritage. The more interesting intersections happen on the level of musical style and the aesthetic Joubert adopts. This point will be returned to in the discussion of *Silas Marner* in Chapter Four.

### **Community as a moral place between nations**

John Joubert’s compositions are firmly rooted in his personal convictions. Kenneth Birkin states that ‘[i]f one were to attempt to sum up John Joubert as man and musician in a

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<sup>82</sup> John Joubert, ‘On setting Yeats’s *Byzantium*’, *The Musical Times*, 123 (1982), 249.

<sup>83</sup> Wilfred Mellers, ‘John Joubert and the Blessed City’, *The Musical Times*, 105 (1964), 814.

<sup>84</sup> The author should like to thank Carina Venter for this insight.

single word that word would probably be “integrity”.<sup>85</sup> In another account of Joubert’s ethics as a composer, Joubert is described as...

...a natural conservative who would preserve the values he believes in. This doesn’t imply political conservatism. On the contrary, one might think of Joubert as an old-fashioned radical, fighting, through his music, for basic human rights. This involves an affirmation – perhaps one should say a reaffirmation – of European, and specifically of British, humanist traditions. The great age of European humanism was the baroque; in the conventions of the classical baroque Joubert’s music is unambiguously rooted....So if Joubert has devoted considerable attention to music for the church as well as for the stage, this isn’t because there’s a mystical streak in his make-up; it’s rather because, as a traditional humanist, he feels the need of traditional sanctions. In this sense he’s normally a public composer; when he uses religious texts, as he does in his fine motets on the theme of peace [the Pro Pace motets], he does so in order to encourage us to live up to, rather than escape from, our human responsibilities.<sup>86</sup>

What Birkin somewhat elusively dubs Joubert’s artistic and personal ‘integrity’ is perceived to be a dedicated humanism by Mellers. What both writers hint at is that there is a larger force, conviction or principle at work in Joubert’s compositions than merely the idea of composing for the sake of composing. Mellers’s observation that Joubert is ‘normally a public composer’, confirms that Joubert feels compelled to contribute constructively to the greater good of the community (or communities) through his compositions, a vision in which commissions play a vital role (as discussed above, see p. 32). As Peter Dickenson rightly asserts with reference to Mellers’s article, Joubert is ‘passionately concerned with people and with communication.’<sup>87</sup>

The importance of communication with the public accounts for Joubert’s (then) controversial stance concerning the avant-garde, which he openly condemned in its heyday.<sup>88</sup> He deems the avant-garde a ‘bad thing for society in general’:

For one thing, it means that a great deal of creative energy is going to waste in a narrowly circumscribed and socially unrepresentative group. For another, it means that artists – many of them of great talent and perhaps of potential genius – can draw neither the intellectual nourishment

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<sup>85</sup> ‘John Joubert: an appreciation’, on Joubert’s website (accessed 27 September 2008), <[www.johnjoubert.org.uk/appreciation.html](http://www.johnjoubert.org.uk/appreciation.html)>.

<sup>86</sup> Wilfred Mellers, ‘John Joubert and the Blessed City’, *The Musical Times*, 105 (1964), 814-815.

<sup>87</sup> Peter Dickenson, ‘John Joubert Today’, *The Musical Times* 112 (1971), 20 referring to Wilfred Mellers, ‘John Joubert and the Blessed City’, 815.

<sup>88</sup> See John Joubert’s letter, ‘The Musical *Avant-Garde*’, *Musical Times*, 98 (1957), 33.

nor the emotional stimulus, nor even the materials of their language, from the civilization in which they are living.<sup>89</sup>

Apart from the Joubert's already-mentioned personal imperative to 'play an intelligible role in society', apparent from the quote, he also clearly values the teleological development of the art music tradition highly. The importance he ascribes to transmission of knowledge from one generation to another, the former generation creating the foundations for the next generation to build on, might perhaps be the result of Joubert's own experience with teachers in composition that benefited or compromised his development, or perhaps even result from his position as a teacher of composition at that time. But the most significant part of Joubert's rebuke of the avant-garde is his objection against exclusivity, a particularly significant perspective when Joubert's own white (exclusive) South African identity is taken into account. But perhaps here it also speaks to a double displacement experienced by Joubert (as a practitioner of a 'displaced art' in South Africa, and being displaced himself in the place that should be his artistic 'home'). It is therefore conceivable that Joubert was particularly sensitive to subtexts of exclusivity or alienation. Hence his clarifying statement on what he understands as integrity and the importance he assigns to the composer's responsibilities:

Integrity, as I see it, means wholeness, and as such must be as positive and inclusive as possible. The vocation to be a composer must be a vocation to serve others and to lead others: and that involves being a musician in a wider sense as well. In other words, the practice of one's calling involves responsibilities of the highest order towards the community – and ultimately the society – in which one lives. The issue is a moral one...<sup>90</sup>

Composers regarded by Joubert as exemplary in these terms are Elgar and Shostakovich, as '[b]oth lived through cataclysmic historical events in which their music became the focus of national and patriotic sentiment. Both could speak to the connoisseur as well as to the middle-brow concert-goer...they could turn their hand to music of a lighter sort without in the least compromising their integrity.'<sup>91</sup> In these composers' works Joubert clearly recognizes music in service of community.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> See John Joubert's review of the book 'Shostakovich: a Life Remembered' by Elizabeth Wilson in *Music and Letters*, 76:2 (1995), 318.

Joubert's aspiration towards integrity in his composition could be read as a defiance of the loss of community, separation and disruption that he experienced in his displaced positions in both South Africa and Britain. It could even be regarded as a political subtext against the same separation and disruption that his country of birth had imposed on its black citizens in their policies. For while Joubert was hardly ever a political radical, he never shied away from expressing his political views. The Second Symphony is an example of this, as is a letter he wrote to Chisholm in 1961. In this letter he relates that the South African Information Service sponsored an exhibition of South African music and that he was approached for a contribution. Joubert made material available, but granted them permission for its use only if the exhibition was 'open to all races'.<sup>92</sup> Joubert could indeed be described as, paradoxically, actively propagating pacifism.<sup>93</sup> In a discussion on his second opera, *Under Western Eyes*, he even states as much unequivocally:

...both Conrad and I would probably agree with Razumov's recipe for human progress: 'History not Theory. Patriotism and Internationalism. Evolution not Revolution. Direction not Destruction. Unity not Disruption.'<sup>94</sup>

At this point, it is perhaps pertinent to pause and consider Joubert's stake in adopting this stance. What is undoubtedly evidence of strong personal convictions, a sense of responsibility towards a disciplinary music community has a flipside in the expectations of such a community in turn: the blurring of boundaries that divide the included from the excluded, which eases the traversing of conventional borders between nationalities, traditions and cultures. Under these circumstances, displacement holds no cultural losses and gains, there is only the creation of a multi-faceted whole of otherness.

## Conclusion

This chapter has considered the importance of place in the biography and, to a limited extent, musical language of John Joubert (which will be explored further in a later chapter). The physical disjunctures effected by Joubert's relocation has resulted in various

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<sup>92</sup> See letter from Joubert to Chisholm (9 August 1961), BC 129 23.172.39.

<sup>93</sup> 'Pacifism' is here intended to denote a '[b]elief in or advocacy of peaceful methods as feasible and desirable alternatives to war...' See *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* (accessed 16 October 2008) <<http://www.oed.com>>.

<sup>94</sup> John Joubert quoting Joseph Conrad in 'Under Western Eyes', *The Musical Times* 110 (1969), 470.

notions of identity which could be applied to his situation, which includes the colonial white identity, the adopted English one, an ‘outsider’ to the centre’s music ‘Tradition’ and the composer within this ‘Tradition’ that exhibits a fairly conservative embracing thereof as opposed a challenging, experimental approach to it.

His musical voice, I have argued, is paradoxically less dependant on the surface displacement suggested by his biographical displacement from South Africa to England than by his more abstractly constructed marginality as a creative artist in conversation with a perceived canon or metropolitan centre. Musical style, at one remove from the literal language of place, contests this kind of surface displacement in ways that don’t reference place in obvious ways. It could indeed be argued, at least theoretically at this point, that the intersection between the identities present in his work is better understood to be expressed stylistically in the aesthetic Joubert adopts than the musical material itself. The discussion of the opera *Silas Marner* in Chapter Four will return to this point.

Not least of these manifestations are the accessibility of Joubert’s works and their deliberately scripted wide appeal to most audiences, in contrast to the exclusivity of the avant-garde which Joubert strongly criticised. In this, it is evident that Joubert’s sense of moral responsibility displaces his authorial concern from the level of the national place to the level of the community and the composer’s responsibility to the community. This sense of responsibility is one in which place is acutely important, but in a general humanistic and universal kind of way. I suggest, therefore, that the biographical and musical displacements pertaining to Joubert resulted in place becoming important to him, but in an unexpected way. The place he occupies with conviction is neither South Africa nor England; it is the place of responsible interaction with community and by extension, humanity.

The case of John Joubert suggests, as does Radhakrishnan, that the loss of single ‘nationality’ in cases of displacement does not signal the loss of national identity in total, but rather the birth of multiple identities, and primarily the identity of the citizen of humanity in general, that are determined by the unique national encounters made possible by displacement. The imagined community of the displaced person grows and diversifies. It is in this way that nationality remains importance in cultural discourse today, not as a single denominator of a composer’s style, but as a key to a uniquely pluralistic identity. In this biographical consideration of the importance of place, the opera *Silas Marner* is a particularly significant work.

It is the first full-length opera by a South African-born composer, and it was commissioned from South Africa and first performed there. And yet the very claim of its South Africanness can be disputed, for the opera was conceived by a composer who had not seen his country of birth for thirteen years. *Silas Marner*'s commission and performance in South Africa in fact signified a return for John Joubert, as was discussed in this chapter. It could thus be argued that the opera was spurred by nostalgia and remembrance of South Africa rather than by active engagement with its contemporary 'South Africanness', although it was also inevitably informed by the composer's newly acquired English environment. The next chapter will explore these notions of plurality in Joubert's choice of text and adaptation thereof for the libretto of the opera.

### From author to novel to libretto...

The notions of displacement discussed thus far constitute an exploration and mapping of displacement on a general level in the first chapter and an investigation of the relevance of some of these notions in the biography and works of John Joubert in the second. The focus will continue to become narrower, as the following two chapters consider the notion of displacement in a single musical work: Joubert's opera *Silas Marner* (op. 31). In the previous chapter it was already stated that *Silas Marner* could be considered a pivotal work in Joubert's life and compositional career. The work was instrumental in his return to South Africa after his first extended period of residence in England, but also stood at the advent of his adoption of British citizenship, shortly after which Joubert's appointment in Birmingham (1962) ushered in a new 'period' in his compositional style. Apart from the biographical and stylistic significance that *Silas Marner* assumes, it is musically significant as Joubert's first full-length opera – a genre that Joubert describes as his 'preferred art form'.<sup>95</sup>

Joubert's attraction to opera is evident; it draws on two art forms that are of great interest to this composer, namely music and literature. A third ingredient differentiates it from the vocal compositions that Joubert became renowned for, namely drama.<sup>96</sup> Opera could thus be considered a genre that crosses the boundaries of separate art forms, that merge their individual aspects into a multi-faceted whole. It then follows that opera, as a complex art, could be read on many levels within its constituent arts' domains, but also across it. The music of an opera, the libretto, the details of the costumes, décor or the production (*Inszenierung*) could all be studied on their own, but in the final analysis these facets are mutually dependent and determining.

In the study of *Silas Marner*, the materials needed to enable a complete discussion as described above were not available. There has only been three productions of the opera, one in Cape Town and one in London (both in 1961), and one studio performance for the

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<sup>95</sup> See Kenneth Birkin, 'Joubert, John (Pierre Herman)', 458.

<sup>96</sup> These three art forms, namely music, poetry (or literature) and drama, are deemed the three pillars of opera by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, 'Introduction: On Analyzing Opera', *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*, eds. Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1989), 4.

SABC in 1962. Sound recordings exist of the London and SABC productions, although the SABC's production was edited and cut to fit in a time slot for broadcasting purposes. No visual documentation exists with exception of a few photographs for publicity purposes. It also needs to be mentioned that the London production of the opera was a workshop production where the objective was to have new operas staged, albeit with the barest décor, costumes and lighting and minimal rehearsals that a once-off production could afford.

This chapter will, for the present, not dwell on the music but on the novel that preceded the opera and how this novel became a libretto. It explores how the novel *Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe* speaks to the notion of displacement and its significance as operatic subject matter, especially in the light of the discussion of John Joubert's biography in the previous chapter. The adaptation of a novel to form a libretto is a process that may in itself be regarded as displacing the novel from its natural, written and read context to an awkward, in-between phase – not yet set to music that invokes and complement the meaning of the words and forge it to an ultimately aural context.

### **The author**

The bearing of displacement on the life (and works) of George Eliot could be read without too much difficulty. *Silas Marner* is, after all, the work of a female writer who assumed a male pseudonym. This references complicated negotiations within a society in which prejudiced readings of women's writing were based on notions of the 'natural inferiority' of women.<sup>97</sup> But similarly telling is the author's need to distinguish herself from the numerous female authors who produced unmemorable fiction, a stance to which Eliot's essay 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' (1856), bears testimony.

A second obvious reading of displacement that overlaps with the first, would be the various names by which this author is known.<sup>98</sup> Born Mary Anne Evans on 22 November 1819, this 'overly intense and bookish child [of] a practical household'<sup>99</sup> developed into a devout follower of the Evangelic and later Calvinistic practices during adolescence, a change that was marked by her purging herself of any perceived excesses

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<sup>97</sup> See George Levine, 'Introduction', *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge and New York, 2001), 4.

<sup>98</sup> See Bodenheimer, 'A woman of many names', *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge and New York, 2001), 20-37.

<sup>99</sup> See Bodenheimer, 'A woman of many names', 21.



or indulgences in her life, including the -e in Anne.<sup>100</sup> Mary Ann, however, became increasingly disillusioned with her religious practices, and abandoned them at the age of twenty two.<sup>101</sup> Nearly a decade later, after considerable familial tension at her renunciation of religious practices, but nevertheless caring for her sickly father until his death whilst translating Strauss's *The Life of Jesus*, the more elegantly named Marian Evans set off to London in 1849 to pursue a career as assistant-editor of the *Westminster Review* and freelance essayist and reviewer. There she met George Henry Lewes who became her life partner until his death in 1878. Although Lewes was already married, Marian adopted his surname (thus becoming Marian Evans Lewes) and insisted on being called Mrs. Lewes, as 'she knew and felt that she was Mrs. Lewes in every way except the technical legal one.'<sup>102</sup> In her work as novelist, she was known as George Eliot although her reviews were, by standard practice, published anonymously.<sup>103</sup>

George Eliot was thus a woman of many identities, her various names denoting the identities she adopted for a specific role or period of her life. The various roles associated with her names were clearly defined according to the particular activity she was engaged in (for instance anonymity for reviews, George Eliot for novels, Mrs. Lewes in private). The adoption of the name Marian Evans Lewes denotes in the first instance her evolution as an intellectual – no longer in her baby shoes as Mary Anne, nor as religious follower or denouncer as Mary Ann, now in her intellectual coming of age as Marian –, and in the second instance her ambivalent marital standing – the surname Evans eliciting her unmarried, formally independent status, but her adoption of Lewes indicating, insisting and attempting to validate her attachment to George Henry Lewes.<sup>104</sup> Although the writer Eliot evinced the intellectual abilities that were, within her social context, associated with men, her personal life clearly evidenced the emotional qualities and needs associated with women. Yet, as Bodenheimer remarks, the pseudonym George Eliot ironically becomes the most stable denominator for this author and person;<sup>105</sup> the consciously assumed identity becomes the most real one. In view of the unorthodoxy, alienation and scandal

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<sup>100</sup> See F.B. Pinnion, *A George Eliot Companion* (London and Basingstoke, 1981), 9-12 and Bodenheimer, 'A woman of many names', 22.

<sup>101</sup> See Bodenheimer, 'A woman of many names', 23.

<sup>102</sup> See Rosemarie Bodenheimer, 'A woman of many names', 28. Feminists would of course have much to say about the male role that renders the feminine respectable, but the present author would rather suggest that art and the creative realm pose unique opportunities to negotiate and transcend boundaries that are culturally or traditionally imposed. In this sense the creative arts are the ideal medium for expressing and negotiating the cultural complexities of displacement.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>105</sup> See Rosemarie Bodenheimer, 'A woman of many names', 20.

Mary Anne/Mary Ann/Marian's nonconformity caused, it is significant that it was George Eliot, the writer, who redeemed her social stature and respectability. Commenting on the successful last decade of Eliot's life and career, Bodenheimer once again perceptively remarks that '...George Eliot now had a social existence: she had written her way not only to celebrity but also to respectability.'<sup>106</sup>

Yet, for all the ostracisms Eliot endured owing to the conservative, religion-imbued moral strictures of her time, Eliot's work and life professed of an unshakeable integrity. This moral quality is a clear point of interface between her writing and Joubert's music, as is the strongly developed social conscience and the moral obligations in both the writing (Eliot) and the music (Joubert). This conviction is particularly present in Eliot's art, for, as she asserted, '[i]f Art does not enlarge men's sympathies, it does nothing morally.'<sup>107</sup> Indeed, Eliot viewed her 'artistic mission as a service promoting human goodness,'<sup>108</sup> reminiscent of Meller's description of Joubert as an 'old radical, fighting, through his music, for basic human rights.' (see chapter 2, p. 36) Of course, John Joubert's life reflects very little of the radicalism that is evident from George Eliot's biography. Yet, Joubert's unwavering upholding and perpetuation of his convictions, for instance his opposition to the avant-garde, constitutes a radical artistic position for his time in the context of twentieth century developments in music. It is in this respect that Joubert matches Eliot's deep-rooted, even radical integrity.

The notion of 'real' and 'assumed' identities enabled by a consideration of Eliot's names, is particularly significant in a discourse centred on displacement. Eliot's 'assumed' identity provided her with stability otherwise absent from her 'real' life, and in that respect the 'assumed' became more 'real' than reality itself. Joubert's 'assumed' English identity could have done much the same thing. Even more important, perhaps, was that the negotiations of identity in both cases involved the stabilization and shoring up of marginalized identities. It would be valid to wonder what this comparison between Eliot and Joubert achieves. Correspondences between understandings of the lives and works of Eliot and Joubert are significant in the sense that they point to displacement and complex identity resulting from displacement as a common biographical and artistic undercurrent that might (subconsciously) have been of interest to Joubert in selecting *Silas Marner* as a subject fit for operatic treatment. To this extent, I am suggesting, Joubert's choice of *Silas*

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>107</sup> Eliot quoted in Pinion, *A George Eliot Companion*, 31.

<sup>108</sup> Bodenheimer, 'A woman of many names', 26.

*Marnier* could have been more than a literary or musical one. And if this were indeed the case, the indisputably moral tone of the novel and the biographical context of its author that informs it, might have played a significant role.

## The novel

The novel *Silas Marner* was conceived by Eliot as an interjection between the completion of *The Mill on the Floss* in March 1860 and the historical novel (that would become *Romola*) that Eliot had in mind since her and Lewes's visit to Italy from March to June that year.<sup>109</sup> *Silas Marner*, which is considerably shorter than Eliot's other novels, posed a more readily accessible topic than the historically-based *Romola*. The former, like Eliot's earlier novels *Scenes of a Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, derives from the landscape and society of Eliot's youth in the English Midlands in the environs of Nuneaton and Coventry. Eliot's father was a farm manager to the particularly wealthy Newdigate family for the best part of Eliot's childhood, which rendered their social standing middle class, an unusual position in a society often portrayed as polarized between upper and lower classes. Eliot was privileged to use the Newdigates' library at Arbury Hall, which exposed her to the life and ways of the upper class, although she was also no stranger to the working class who travailed under her father's direction.<sup>110</sup> It is thus not surprising that in her novels, Eliot was 'less likely to depict the [Victorian] social world as divided into starkly oppositional social classes...than she is to create a variegated community in which the story centers on the fates of characters who disturb or violate the norms of belief or behavior in that community.'<sup>111</sup>

This is indeed the case in *Silas Marner*, where every sector of society is represented: the affluent upper-class Squire (an important man in a small community)<sup>112</sup> and his sons, the well-to-do Lammeters, the upper middle-class Dr. Kimble and Mr. Crackenthorpe, the middle-class tailor and parish-clerk, Mr. Macey, the deputy-clerk Mr. Tookey, and the working-class Silas Marner and Mrs. Winthrop. Yet this type of

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<sup>109</sup> See Pinion, *A George Eliot Companion*, 3 and 33-34.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>111</sup> Bodenheimer, 'A woman of many names', 21.

<sup>112</sup> 'He [Squire Cass] was only one among several landed parishioners, but he alone was honoured with the title of Squire; for though Mr Osgood's family was also understood to be of timeless origin...he merely owned the farm he occupied; whereas Squire Cass had a tenant or two, who complained of the game to him quite as if he had been a lord.' See George Eliot, *Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe* (London and New York, 1996), 23.

categorization is defied by characters that act outside their traditionally cast class contexts: Godfrey Cass crossed class boundaries by marrying Molly Farren and Silas Marner raised Eppie, a role deemed more suitable to a woman.

However Eliot might have challenged the social conventions of her time in the nature and behaviour of her main characters, she did not seek an escape from the society that imposed such strictures. On the contrary, these societies remained very real in her novels, but she challenged their strictures in the outcomes she imagines for her rebelling protagonists. The England she portrayed through her depiction of the imaginary town Raveloe is an accurate reflection of the rural life and scenery of Eliot's contemporary England. This is supported by the 'realist aesthetic' that Josephine McDonagh observes in all Eliot's novels.<sup>113</sup> She further comments that with the advent of industrialization and urbanization, Eliot's early novels not only serve as a kind of 'archive' for a life and environment that would soon change irrevocably, but also as a 'corrective to the contemporary experience of migration, urbanization and technological change.'<sup>114</sup> In a sense, the same might be posited of Joubert's preservation of the perhaps 'archaic', traditionalist notion of tonality in the twentieth century and his strong criticism of the avant-garde. What is suggested here is that the preservation and archiving of practices that are perceived to be endangered contributes to a moral agenda that strongly resonates in both Eliot's and Joubert's works. Eliot's wistfulness, however, not only pertains to the place that is depicted, but also the conceptions of time that are in stark contrast with modern notions thereof:

The world of the past is...represented as though it belongs to a different order of time: natural or mythic time, shaped before the onset of chronological, regulated and commodified time: the time of modernity...Against the sense that the old world is separated from the modern world by an unbridgeable division, a crucial part of the project of the early novels is in fact to chart a shift from the old to the new, but also to show how modern society can, ideally, be infused with the values of the old. The shift from the old to the new is usually presented as a progression, and tends to be underwritten by ideas of gradual change, growth, or evolution.<sup>115</sup>

In the context of this thesis, the notion of artistically charting 'a shift from the old to the new' is of course highly significant. First, it implies a connection between creative and

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<sup>113</sup> Josephine McDonagh, 'The early novels', *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge and New York, 2001), 39.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>115</sup> Josephine McDonagh, 'The early novels', 43-4.

social processes. Second, it is noticeable that the aesthetic dynamic of charting ‘a shift from the old to the new’ is, if anything, inverted in Joubert’s charting of a shift from the new (colony) to the old (Europe), but the negotiation that happens between different worlds is the essence of what happens in writing and composition of both Eliot and Joubert respectively. It opens up the possibility that the opera *Silas Marner* could be viewed as an exemplary text of displacement: as a story balancing between the old and new worlds, and as an opera that does the same thing but in a different way.

Despite *Silas Marner*’s realistic depictions of English rural life, Eliot’s writing achieves an interesting combination of distance and proximity between the reader and the narrative. McDonagh notes a ‘fairy-tale quality’ in the novel,<sup>116</sup> a notion that the present author attributes to the particular role of the third-person narrator. This kind of narration creates a distance between the reader and the narrative, as the reader is made fully aware of the fictional nature of the narrative with phrases such as ‘In the days when the spinning-wheels hummed busily...’ or ‘In the early years of this century’ that defies the sense of reality that a more specific location in time would achieve. The setting is ambivalent, for the imaginary town Raveloe in which the plot unfolds is clothed in anonymity, whereas the allusion to English rural towns could not be more clear and precise. It is as if this ‘unnamed’ town could be any town in the English Midlands, and this widens the narrative’s application to any community instead of limiting it to only one. Thus a certain measure of distance and closeness is achieved. The descriptions of the characters and their predicaments, on the other hand, are very real and evoke a sense of sympathy, and hence closeness, on the part of the reader. In addition, a particularly vivid picture of the society that these characters inhabit is created by the use of dialect:

The rural characters are given strong local dialects in which they voice simply constructed thoughts; on the other hand, even when they belong to the same communities, the main protagonists increasingly slip into standard English, in which they articulate complex ideas and distinctive individual opinions...[T]he early novels tend to produce a split between this bucolic background of local and customary knowledge and habit, and, on the other hand, a world in which individuals have psychological complexity and are capable of economic and social progression. This division or fissure is an important feature of the early novels...<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 48. For a comment on the role of the narrator and its gendered position, see Kate E. Brown, ‘Loss, Revelry and Temporal measures of “Silas Marner”’: Performance, Regret and Recollection’, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 32.2 (Spring 1999), 222-249; see especially footnote 8.

<sup>117</sup> Josephine McDonagh, ‘The early novels’, 41-2.

In stripping the novel of a particular place and time, the focus is placed on the community (which, in its non-specificity, could be any community), which is constituted by human relations. The particular relations between the main protagonists as individuals and independent thinkers against the backdrop of a unified community are highlighted by the dialect that sets them apart. Yet, the remoteness between the protagonists and the community is redeemed through their interaction; a process in which the protagonist as well as the community develops. This process does not entail a total compromise on either part, but the development of the characters and subtle changes culminate in a mutual understanding despite some differences.

George Eliot said of *Silas Marner* that ‘...it sets – or is intended to set – in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations.’<sup>118</sup> This ambition for the novel and the idea of acceptance in spite of difference must have been of particular personal significance for the author, who, since living with Henry Lewes out of wedlock, was shunned even by the liberal society that she associated with before this partnership. Eliot’s *Silas Marner*, viewed in this way, is a story in which the characters enact the dynamics of authorial displacement in subtle and revelatory ways. More significant for the argument being developed here, is that this reading of Eliot’s novel complements the notion of Joubert’s *Silas Marner* as a work born from a deep commitment to community informed by a sensitivity to place.

### **The libretto**

It is significant that the three large-scale operas composed by Joubert are all based on nineteenth-century novels that deal with displacement. The first of these is *Silas Marner* (op. 31) composed from 1959 to 1960, followed by an adaptation of Joseph Conrad’s *Under Western Eyes* (op. 51) composed in 1968 and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (op. 134) that was composed over a period of ten years from 1987 (the year Joubert retired) to 1997. It is thus apparent that the displacement topos occupied Joubert musically and intellectually for the better part of his career.

All Joubert’s operas take their subject matter from novels. The novel as literary medium serves the topic of displacement particularly well, for, by its nature, it portrays the world as fractured and uncertain, a place in which value systems, social and religious ideas are relative. The central theme of the novel is the alienation of man from his world; the

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<sup>118</sup> Eliot quoted in Pinion, *A George Eliot Companion*, 131.

protagonist is a disrupted seeker.<sup>119</sup> Opera is of course the natural musical partner of the novel, as its scope can best accommodate a lengthy unfolding of a plot, the staging can visually construct much of the descriptive passages and the singing can, to some extent, preserve or enhance the beauty of the word. If opera is Joubert's preferred compositional genre, his choice of novels for storylines is significant in terms of 'displacement' even before it becomes apparent that his chosen stories also thematize displacement.

In the selection of the text to be set to music, Joubert requires not 'simplicity, but suitability for being read aloud,' a notion that he also supports with reference to the 'earlier [literary] tradition', where 'poetry (and a great deal of prose) was designed for performance.'<sup>120</sup> Joubert thus views literature to be performative, functional and comprehensible to those who hear it, and in that sense he requires it to have a social intelligibility. He is therefore opposed to the musical setting of texts in which the phrases or even words are fragmented, for 'poetry should be enhanced, not violated, by its incarnation into music.'<sup>121</sup> It would not be unreasonable to translate this philosophy of the co-existence of music and words to Joubert's treatment of text in opera. In the adaptation of texts to libretto, Joubert regards it 'absolutely necessary for a poet and composer to collaborate on equal terms', although he acknowledges that 'an opera usually stands or falls by its music (who ever heard of an opera that succeeded in spite of its music?).'<sup>122</sup> Joubert's dominance of this process is, however, articulated in his interview with Stephen Tunnicliffe:

In the latter case [an opera or oratorio] the literary collaborator has the unenviable task...of producing words on a subject which has probably been chosen by the composer, casting – and recasting – them to his (the composer's) specification. In my own case, once this has been done in accordance with my basic conception of the general shape and content of the work, the text is treated with the same concern for poetic and musical truth that I hope I would bring to the setting of any other text. The great advantage to the composer of this arrangement is that, if at any stage the composing process is not working, the librettist can be summoned and exhorted to try again. In this situation the text can hardly be said to have reached its final form until the actual musical composition is finished.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> For a summary of Lukacs's thoughts on the attributes of the novel form as contrasted with the epic, see M.G. Scholtz, 'Roman', *Literêre Terme en Teorieë*, ed. T.T. Cloete, (Pretoria, 1992) 437.

<sup>120</sup> Stephen Tunnicliffe's interview with John Joubert, 'Composing Music for Poetry', 6.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>123</sup> Stephen Tunnicliffe's interview with John Joubert, 'Composing Music to Poetry', 7-8.

In his works that required textual adaptation, Joubert did not collaborate with one librettist exclusively. The most enduring collaborations were with Stephen Tunnicliffe (*The Martyrdom of St. Alban*, op. 59; *The Raising of Lazarus*, op. 67; *The Wayfarers*, op.98), Adolf Wood (*In the Drought*, op. 17) and Rachel Trickett (*Antigone*, op. 11; *Silas Marner*, op. 31; *Tennyson's Craft*, no opus number). Geldenhuys asserts that Joubert prefers 'not to work with writers of too much fame as librettists,' as the composer 'has the need to sometimes change the words to suit the libretto.'<sup>124</sup> Whether or not this statement holds truth, Joubert certainly did not work with librettists that were mediocre in literary terms. The librettist of *Silas Marner* for instance, Rachel Trickett, was a scholar of note and a novelist of reasonable reputation, to which her professorship at Oxford and her six published novels bear evidence.<sup>125</sup>

It is probable that Joubert knew Trickett from Hull, where she was a lecturer in English from 1946 to 1954.<sup>126</sup> Joubert was the only composer for whom she wrote libretti, and it is thus likely that the writing of the libretto was as much of an artistic exploration for her than writing an opera was for Joubert when they first collaborated on *Antigone* (1954), a short radio opera in four scenes. This first operatic venture for both artists was possibly made easier by the fact that it was a radio opera, and hence did not require as much attention to the practicalities that staging involve.<sup>127</sup> While Trickett might have been an inexperienced librettist, her literary and scholarly abilities would have been invaluable in making *Silas Marner* into a libretto. She would, no doubt, have been knowledgeable about scholarly discourse on Eliot's life and works.

In making a novel into a libretto, it is helpful if the novel is well-known already, as the audience's existing knowledge of the characters and the plot would render more omissions viable without compromising the plot's intelligibility.<sup>128</sup> In Britain at the time, the revival of Eliot's novels had been underway for approximately a decade after it fell into 'the disrepute that attended almost all things Victorian' in the first half of the

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<sup>124</sup> Geldenhuys, 'John Joubert se komposisies', 100. 'Weens 'n behoefte om soms aan die woorde te kan verander om by die musiek aan te pas, verkies Joubert om nie met skrywers van te groot naam as librettiste saam te werk nie.'

<sup>125</sup> See 'Mabel Rachel Trickett', *Contemporary Authors Online* (accessed 23 October 2008), <<http://go.galegroup.com>>.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Joubert's inexperience with staging an opera is apparent from the correspondence between Joubert and Chisholm, where the scene changes became problematic owing to the inadequate duration of the music that leads from one scene into the next. See the letter of Chisholm to Joubert, (26 October 1959), BC 129 23.172.1.

<sup>128</sup> Brian Trowell, 'Libretto (ii): A secondary art?', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 20 October 2008), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>>.



twentieth century.<sup>129</sup> In South Africa, a remark by Chisholm that ‘every schoolboy and schoolgirl knows’ the outcome of Eppie’s predicament in choosing to live with her biological or adopted father, alludes to the possibility that the novel *Silas Marner* was a prescribed work for schools at that time.<sup>130</sup> According to these indications, it would probably have been possible for the composer and librettist to rely on the audience’s existing knowledge to a certain extent.

As can be expected, Trickett’s adaptation of *Silas Marner* is a much truncated version of the novel. As is the case with most libretti based on novels, all characters and events except for those that are essential to the plot are disposed of, and many curtailments are made, even if it alters the narrated events of the novel. The character that is inevitably affected most by changes, curtailments and omissions is, of course, the protagonist of the novel. Silas’s first arioso, based on the first and second chapters of the novel, summarizes a period of fifteen years in Marner’s life. Although it recounts the key events that led to his relocation from Lantern Yard and settling in Raveloe, Trickett’s rendition of these events do not follow the finer details Eliot’s text closely and, for the sake of brevity, obviously omits most of the smaller events of Marner’s previous life.

The omissions from Marner’s life in Lantern Yard include his devoted involvement with the church sect, his engagement to Sarah and his best friend and betrayer, William Dane’s eventual marriage to Sarah. These seemingly smaller events signify the people and activities that furnished Marner’s life before his first metamorphosis occurred when he was severed from the community by the outcome of the drawing of the lots, his renunciation of God and finally his abolishment of this community and life. This puts Marner’s life in Lantern Yard in stark contrast with the one in Raveloe that consists only of weaving and keeping himself alive, thus described by Eliot: ‘He seemed to weave, like the spider, from pure impulse, without reflection.’<sup>131</sup> Eliot’s description is well-portrayed by the music accompanying the arioso, although the libretto is naturally devoid of as much detail. His profession, his sole *raison d’être* in his first fifteen years in Raveloe, is ironically also his only link with his past. From Marner’s life in Raveloe is also omitted his attempt at reconciliation with the Raveloe community by healing Sally Oates, an act that resulted in even more alienation by heightening superstition about Marner.

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<sup>129</sup> George Levine, ‘Introduction: George Eliot and the art of realism’, *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, 1.

<sup>130</sup> See Erik Chisholm, ‘John Joubert’s opera “Silas Marner” has everything’, *The Argus* (11 May 1961).

<sup>131</sup> Eliot, *Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe*, 16.

The next metamorphosis in the character Marner, according to the novel, is his adoption of Eppie. This is only briefly mentioned in Nancy's arioso at the beginning of Act III with the words: 'And she's changed the old man completely / No one would know him now for the sullen creature he was'. This brief account of the events is surprising, for this is a transformation on which the most important outcome of the novel hinges. Not only does the company of the child lead to a sense of social rehabilitation, but it also establishes a link between Marner and the community as they lend a helping hand with the raising of the child in the novel. A seminal event in the process of Eppie's rearing that is also omitted is her christening. This brings Marner back to the issue of religion for the first time since leaving Lantern Yard.

The role of religion thus becomes intrinsic to belonging to a particular community in both cases of transformation. In the first case, Marner's involvement with the church sect in Lantern Yard signified his belonging to the religious community, and the betrayal that Marner suffered at the hands of this community led to his renunciation of religion and thereby loss of place in society and his relocation from Lantern Yard. The understanding of this part of the novel is vital to the understanding the significance and extent of Marner's miserliness and reclusion in Raveloe. Marner's sense of responsibility as a parent is the ultimate force that brings about his transformation. Not only does the bonding with Eppie herald the end of Marner's personal isolation, it also marks his return to religion and, in so-doing, regaining a sense of community. Marner's transformations are all the more remarkable if the full extent of his devotion to the community at Lantern Yard, the loss thereof and the miraculous recovery of a sense of belonging is known.

This also renders Marner's attachment to his gold as substitute for human encounters and Eppie in turn as substitute for the gold more conceivable. Yet, for all its significance, religion and religiosity is entirely omitted in Trickett's adaptation of the novel. It could be argued that the composer and librettist relied on the audience's knowledge of the novel to fill in additional background of the characters, but religiosity as an operatic theme could have been successfully portrayed, especially by a composer adept at writing liturgical music. This would probably have contributed to the depth of the drama the opera seeks to portray.

The considerations in adapting a novel to a libretto do not stop at the omission of events. The practicalities of staging an opera and setting events to scenes sometimes necessitate changes in the order in which the plot unfolds. The most important alterations in the chronology of events was made in Act II. According to the novel, Silas finds the

child at his hearth upon returning to his cottage (chapter 12), after which he finds its mother in the snow not far from the entrance to his cottage and then goes out to call the doctor at the Hall to tend to her (chapter 13). In the libretto, a villager, not Marner as in the novel, alerts the doctor of the need for his assistance with a woman the villager found in the snow (II.i), and Marner finds the child in his cottage in the next scene (II.ii). However, these changes are not made without effect. While the course of the events might have been switched to avoid unnecessary scene changes, the opera's version of the course of events renders the plot less credible. When, in the novel, Marner arrives at the Hall with the child, Godfrey recognizes the child and hence suspect that the woman found in the snow is Molly. In the libretto, an anonymous villager brings the news of the woman in found in the snow, and the mere mention that the woman was drunk causes Godfrey to strongly suspect the woman's identity, which is quite far-fetched.

More changes were made in the scene where Molly is examined (II.ii). In the novel, Marner takes the Doctor to his cottage to examine Molly, whereas in the libretto, the doctor and those accompanying him arrives at Marner's door and asks for the use of his cottage. Marner, until that point in the libretto, is oblivious of Molly's existence. In addition to the presence of the Doctor and Godfrey at Marner's cottage in the novel, the libretto adds the Squire and the villager who reported Molly's condition to the scene. These changes of little consequence, except to have more singers present for what follows. A dispute about Marner's insistence to keep the child is next inserted in the libretto and could only be attributed to operatic dramaturgy, for no one cares much about the child's fate in the novel. The libretto is extremely basic and repetitive and involves all the characters on stage, thus intimating an argument that is nonsensical in a written or spoken context, but culminates musically to an audience-pleasing ensemble and dramatic centrepiece. The musical depiction of the dispute would override the futility of each character's words that cannot be discerned in their simultaneous singing.<sup>132</sup> As the libretto's second act draws to a close, the Squire gives Marner money towards the expenses of the child, whereas in the novel Godfrey does this. It would have made more sense had Godfrey given the money in the opera, for it would have suggested his feelings of guilt about the child, that becomes an important ingredient to the development of the plot in the third act.

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<sup>132</sup> Paul Robinson describes operatic ensembles as one of the 'enemies of [a libretto's] intelligibility'. See 'Reading Libretti and Misreading Opera', *Reading Opera*, eds. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton and Guildford, 1988), 338-9.

Apart from the omissions and chronological alterations, Trickett and Joubert made clever adaptations of certain chapters to utilize the operatic genre's capabilities. The hunt-scene of chapter 4, for instance, is musically portrayed in the orchestral interlude between the first act's scenes ii and iii. The main events of the hunt is recounted in broad strokes in Dunsey's recitative (sc. iii). Here music's aptitude to narrate through sound and evoke images overcome the impossibility of staging large activities such as riding and hunting. While Dunsey's stealing of Marner's gold could simply have been enacted, Trickett's insertion of words to this scene was an imperative, for the rumours of Marner's gold have not been disclosed to the audience before as it were disclosed in the second chapter of the novel. The scene needed verbal articulation to clarify Dunsey's actions, although the music is more important to emphasize the gravity of the event in the plot than the words. Marner's discovery of his gold's theft later in this scene is similarly enunciated in a illustriously orchestrated recitative.

The New Year's ball at the Red House (chapter 11) is well-adapted by the librettist to amend for the fewer characters that the opera allowed. Only the Squire, Doctor Kimble, Godfrey and Nancy are portrayed as individual characters in the libretto, the chorus represents the other guests. The party is at first mostly depicted in the chorus's singing, creating a festive atmosphere, with some recitative interjections by the individual characters mentioned above. Some smaller details of this scene were changed, however, with specific regard to Godfrey's courting Nancy. In their private moment outside the dancing hall, Godfrey imparts to Nancy that he cannot disclose everything he needs to tell her and implores her to trust him, to which she consents. The novel contains no such request; indeed, the request is highly improbable in the situation sketched, where Nancy is determined not to allow herself to express any feelings for Godfrey and Godfrey does his utmost to ignore his bad conscience regarding his marriage to Molly. Consequently, Godfrey and Nancy's love duet in the opera has no semblance to the novel. Once again though, the libretto created the opportunity for an idiosyncratically operatic moment. Similarly, the opera's ending acts out Eppie's marriage to Aaron Winthrop which the conclusion to the novel describes, but the scene is entirely created and worded by Trickett. It is modelled on an operatic grand finale where the whole cast is on stage to celebrate the felicitous conclusion to the opera's travails.

For the scenes that are most typically operatic, such as the ensemble, the duets and choruses, Trickett wrote libretto of her own device that are typically rhymed and mostly metrical. The ariosi, in contrast, are more prose-like and loosely based on the novel's

dialogue, although often paraphrased to condense the information. The recitatives, on the other hand, are frequently lines of dialogue taken directly from the novel and is therefore most prosaic. This gives the recitatives a characteristically spoken quality, although it is always sung and orchestrally accompanied.

What Trickett and Joubert successfully did was to simplify the story enough to ensure the clarity and intelligibility of the plot, furnish it with a clear linearity in which there is discernable progression, increased tension and climaxes. It was effectively divided into three acts, each with its own dramatic trajectory that still creates variation in the dramatic unfolding of each act. The first act is an exposition of the main characters of the opera which sketches their brief backgrounds and predicaments, which culminate to the first crisis: the theft of Marner's gold that concludes the act dramatically before interval. In the second act, the plot develops and complicates sufficiently to provide enough points of interest to sustain the plot through this and the last act, although it works dramatically towards Marner's finding of the child, which replaces the gold, and his argument to keep her, which forms the dramatic focal point for the act. However, enough loose threads remain to merit a final act, in which the main confrontation between Godfrey, Marner and Eppie forms the climax in which the moral crux of the story befittingly comes to fruition. The (perhaps somewhat prolonged) resolution of the climax in Eppie's marriage scene concludes the opera gratifyingly. Trickett and Joubert seized the operatic moments that this plot afforded: the ball scene for almost the full cast, the hunting scene, the dramatic ensembles expressing conflict, the love duets, even the dramatic tempestuous cabaletta for the soprano. It is therefore evident that at least at a macro-level, the ingredients that the novel afforded for a successful opera has been assembled.

Yet, the story told by the opera *Silas Marner* does not realise the dramatic potential it promises. Paradoxically, the very aspects that render the novel successful, qualifies the opera. The problem is two-fold, and directly relates to the character of the novel. First, the novel is stripped to its mere storyline in its adaptation to an opera libretto, and a relatively archaic, irrelevant and weak opera plot remains, notwithstanding the fact that every opportunity at creating typical 'operatic moments' was seized and exploited. In this shift of focus, the novel's narrative is somewhat eschewed, as shifts of emphases inevitably result from this selective treatment. For instance the unquestionably main protagonist in the novel, Silas Marner, emerges at best on an equal footing with Godfrey in the opera. This is effected by opera's focus on action and events, of which those that involve Godfrey are more plentiful and dramatic in the selections made for the opera than those

involving Silas Marner or even Eppie. Indeed, Godfrey's romantic endeavours and dramas seems to fit the operatic bill much more than the subtler changes and metamorphoses that affect Marner in the novel.

This brings us to the second point. Eliot's remarkable insight in her characters and the subtleties that govern their lives render her characters germane. The humaneness of the characters and the honesty with which they are described enables the reader to associate with them, and it is this aspect that renders the novel relevant in an age and context that might differ greatly from that of the novel's setting. The effectiveness of Eliot's novel is located in the subtle changes, developments and metamorphoses that create depth of character, which transforms even simple actions into dramatic moments of the plot. Therefore, the mere plot of the novel, the worse for the simplification thereof, would result in a rather blasé opera plot that, in addition, has little or no relevance for the life and context of the twentieth century audience.

While Joubert evidently had the ability to identify dramatic moments and to transform them into operatic moments, the failure for even this faculty to imbue the novel *Silas Marner* with the necessary operatic drive to render it an operatic success, at least as operatic subject matter, leads us to wonder why this novel was selected as operatic subject matter in the first place. This question opens the window to speculation of the possible socio-biographical influences in Joubert's attraction to Eliot's novel. This suggests that possibility of artistic considerations in the service of socio-biographical imperatives.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that there are certain parallels that can be drawn between the importance of displacement in the biographies of both the composer John Joubert and author George Eliot, as well as in the moral agendas that underscore much of the imperatives in both artists' works. The sense of preserving or archiving material and practices that are endangered by the fast-changing practices and developments of the time, whether artistically or otherwise (living circumstances), provide both author and composer with a moral agenda in their works that take it beyond mere tokens of creative output. While in both cases this stops short of being activism, it does imbue the works with a social voice and critique that is highly personalised. The moral convictions present in the ethos of Joubert and Eliot could be construed to embody the notions of identity that are biographically informed. This reading of the *Silas Marner* libretto productively forms part

as part of a coherent layering of the theme of displacement throughout the conception, thematic content and reception histories of Joubert's *Silas Marner*. The musical significance thereof will be explored in the following chapter.

### **...to Opera: John Joubert's *Silas Marner***

#### **A prematurely collapsed soufflé: context and reception**

Situating John Joubert's opera *Silas Marner* (op.31) is problematic in a number of interesting ways. Composed from 1959 to 1960, its musico-historical context is constituted by works like Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* (1956), Arnold Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* (1957), Paul Hindemith's *Die Harmonie der Welt* (1957), Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1960), Hans-Werner Henze's *Der Prinz von Homburg* (1960) and Luciano Berio's *Passaggio* (1963). These examples depict an image of opera in the mid-twentieth century that encompasses the radical experimentalism of Henze's expressionism and (a little earlier) Dallapiccola's dodecaphony (for instance, *Il Prigioniero* of 1950), the mature flowering of British opera in the works of Britten (and to a lesser degree those of Samuel Barber and Michael Tippett), contrasted with the vernacular operas of Weill and Bernstein. This already eclectic contemporary picture is extended by the historical self-consciousness of neoclassicism as exemplified in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* (1951), and the nationalistic inclinations of Eastern European and Russian opera as represented by, for instance, Sergei Prokofiev's *War and Peace* (1941-1952). *Silas Marner* is none of these things, or perhaps more accurately, a combination of significant elements of these things.

Certainly, nothing in Joubert's oeuvre brings to mind the words 'radical experimentalism'. On the other hand, *Silas Marner* represents a 'first' in terms of its South African context; no other South African-born composer had written a full-length opera before this one and the fact of its composition in itself constitutes a radical development. While the use of form and the underlying tonality in *Silas Marner* are indebted to earlier traditions, it would be incorrect to dub the work Neo-Classical, for Joubert's compositions never departed from a conservative aesthetic rooted in tonality and making use of standard



forms and genres.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, it would be incorrect to think of *Silas Marner*, an opera by a South African composer living in England, as portraying British nationalistic tendencies, yet the opera is based on a text that depicts typical nineteenth-century English rural life in an operatic idiom that relies heavily on the epitome of twentieth-century English opera, Benjamin Britten, and even includes English folksongs.

Whereas Britten's operatic output of eleven operas, spanning from *Peter Grimes* (1945) to *Death in Venice* (1973), becomes the vehicle of the mature composer's voice, this is patently not the case with Joubert. Although *Silas Marner* was his third opera, it is still an early work in the context of the composer's career, and it should be kept in mind that the two operatic attempts that preceded *Silas Marner* were on a much smaller scale. Although opera is Joubert's preferred genre of composition, it is doubtful that Joubert's operas could ever be the conduits of his mature and most powerful musical expression as was the case for Britten, for if Joubert has established himself in any significant way as a composer, it is as one of the most prominent composers of English liturgical and choral music in the twentieth century. None of Joubert's eight operatic works became popular or successful enough to enter the standard repertoire of any of the major (or even smaller) opera houses in England, Europe or his native South Africa, although some of his choral works did achieve that status within the realm of liturgical music.

Switching the focus from the expanded synchronic context elaborated above, and adjusting it to encompass a diachronic perspective, the attempt at situating Joubert's *Silas Marner* becomes no easier. The opera is not informed by the Wagnerian legacy that greatly influenced European opera in the twentieth century. It is also no closer to the *verismo* tradition, expressionism, neo-classicism or vernacular interest that afforded alternative solutions to the so-called 'problem of triviality' after Wagner.<sup>134</sup> Although Joubert's aesthetic could be described as a conservative one, his interest in accessibility and the musical past as such also has little to do with Wagner's operatic heir, Richard Strauss. Whereas the Strauss of *Rosenkavalier* and *Capriccio* makes the interaction with the historical into a high-modernist encounter, Joubert's conservatism reminds more of something highly personal, very serious (not ironic qua Strauss), perhaps a bulwark against rather than an outpost of the avant garde.

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<sup>133</sup> Here I follow along the lines of the argument Chris Walton made about Vaughan Williams in 'Neo-classical opera', *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge and New York, 2005), 107.

<sup>134</sup> See Caroline Harvey, 'Words and actions', *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge and New York, 2005), 47.

The diachronic perspective inaugurates the question of tradition and Joubert's 'situatedness' with regard to a/the tradition.<sup>135</sup> In a very significant way, I should like to argue, the contexts outlined here are connected to the place(s) of *Silas Marner's* composer. The discussion of Joubert and his compositions in chapter two has led to the conclusion that this place is no longer a monolithic denominator of the composer and his works; that displacement necessitates an analysis of the various aspects of plurality that shape the composer and his works. It is indeed in the aesthetic Joubert adopts, rather than any discernable nationalistic influence that his works relate to the places from which they derive. This contention will frame the discussion of *Silas Marner* in the present chapter.

John Joubert composed eight operas. Those of the operas that were commissioned were at least guaranteed a first performance, but further interest swiftly waned. Three of the operas, *The Quarry* (op. 50, 1964), *The Prisoner* (op. 76, 1973) and *The Wayfarers* (op. 98, 1983) were commissioned by schools and are shorter works shaped to different requirements than that of fully-fledged opera. Of the remaining five operas intended for professional performance, Joubert's first experiments with the operatic genre, the radio-opera *Antigone* (op. 11, 1954) in four scenes and the one-act opera *In the Drought* (op. 17, 1955) are also shorter works. *Silas Marner* (op. 31, 1961) is thus the first full-length opera John Joubert composed, followed by *Under Western Eyes* (op. 51, 1968) and *Jane Eyre* (op. 134, 1987-1997).

*Silas Marner's* conception history anticipates its trouble-fraught future. Joubert started his work on the opera in 1959 with a performance by the New Opera Company at Sadler's Wells Theatre (London) in mind. After the work was commenced, it became apparent that the future of the Opera Company was in jeopardy due to the financial difficulties it was experiencing at the time.<sup>136</sup> A timely proposition in the light of the New Opera Company's predicament came from Erik Chisholm, then the director of the South African College of Music, who proposed the opera's commission for the College's Golden Jubilee in 1960.<sup>137</sup> In a following letter from Chisholm, however, new developments were underway: Chisholm proposed that the opera rather be commissioned for a music festival

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<sup>135</sup> David Simpson explains the concept of 'situatedness' as follows: 'It has something to do with being in the world, in place and time, in a way that is at once unignorable but also a bit provisional...It is meant to preserve rather than to resolve the tension we experience between being in control and out of control, between seeing ourselves as agents of change and as passive receivers of what is already in place.' See 'Self-Affiliation and the Management of Confusion', *Situatedness, or, Why We Keep Saying Where We're Coming From* (Durham and London, 2002), 20.

<sup>136</sup> See the letter from John Joubert to Erik Chisholm (7 February 1959), BC 129 25.189.2(2).

<sup>137</sup> Letter from Erik Chisholm to John Joubert (26 January 1959), BC 129 25.189.2(1).

planned in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Union of South Africa (to be held in Bloemfontein) instead of the College's Jubilee.<sup>138</sup> In the letter of 2 March 1959, Chisholm wrote to Joubert:

...[A]t the [music sub-committee's] first meeting last Saturday in Bloemfontein, I proposed that one of the two operas [*Silas Marner* or *In the Drought*]...be produced between May 16/21, [and that it] should be your *Silas Marner*. This suggestion was unanimously agreed to, and you will doubtless shortly receive an official letter to this effect from the Organising Secretary. We want the first performance of your opera to be in South Africa...<sup>139</sup>

After the vocal setting, orchestration and delivery dates of the various acts were discussed in subsequent letters, the anticipated commission failed to materialize, as the Union Festival Committee enigmatically deemed the work 'unsuitable' after viewing extracts from it. Inevitably Joubert took umbrage at the opera's rejection and at the perceived breach of undertaking by the Union Festival Committee. Chisholm was similarly outraged by these developments, and championed the work in the fierce public debate that ensued.<sup>140</sup> This debacle rendered *Silas Marner* famous in South Africa even before its first performance – a status that elicited offers for its staging from the Durban City Orchestra and Maynardville open-air theatre (that sadly never materialized).<sup>141</sup>

Amidst these proceedings, Chisholm and Joubert exchanged correspondence on what had happened, and why. Chisholm wrote to Joubert: 'What's behind it all? Goodness knows...Could be that you are not 100% Afrikaner, and the opera is not about those crashing Voortrekker bores!'<sup>142</sup> This comment was quoted in an article published in the *Cape Argus*, to which Chisholm added that '[t]he remark was, however, a fair rejoinder to the committee whose only objection to *Silas Marner* appears to be that the story is not

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<sup>138</sup> Letter from Erik Chisholm to John Joubert (2 March 1959), BC 129 25.189.2(3).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Among the many articles and letters that emanated from this debacle were: 'Festival Troubles: S.A.B.C. hit for opera rumpus', *The Sunday Times* (5 July 1959); 'Festival Head rejects Chisholm's views on opera omission', *The Cape Argus* (6 July 1959); 'Chisholm Offer Rejected', *Cape Times* (31 July 1959); 'Letters to the Editor: Slight to S.A. composer', *Cape Times* (6 September 1959). The following articles are clippings obtained from the UCT archive of which the dates and names of the newspapers are unknown: 'Uproar Over Rejection of S.A. Opera: Chisholm on Festival "Boneheads"', BC129 16.136.1; 'Dr Chisholm Makes Free Opera Offer', BC129 16.136.6; 'Chisholm's New Plea For Opera', BC129 16.136.7.

<sup>141</sup> Letter from Chisholm to Joubert (4 August 1959), BC 129 25.189.2(11).

<sup>142</sup> Letter from Chisholm to Joubert (25 May 1959), BC 129 25.189.2(8).

South African.’<sup>143</sup> For Joubert the disappointment extended beyond the rejection of the work. On 30 May 1959, he wrote to Chisholm:

During my 13 years in England I have never been able to afford a visit to my native land. In spite of numerous hints from S[outh] African musicians that I was under some sort of moral obligation to return, no practical help was ever offered me, or definite invitation extended, until this opera commission came along – (and all credit to *you* for that). And now it is these selfsame S[outh] African musicians that debar me making the visit that I have so long looked forward to and that they have for so long been telling me I ought to make. Less about my duty to S[outh] Africa – what about S[outh] Africa’s duty towards me?<sup>144</sup>

Despite Joubert’s apparent nostalgia for South Africa, the return he had in mind did not entail permanent resettlement in his native country. This is indicated by his reaction to an article in which Chisholm was (mis?)quoted:

...in one cutting that was sent to me you were reported as saying that I wanted to return to *settle* in South Africa – knowing newspaper reporters as I do you probably never did say this at all, but in case anybody is under misapprehension about it I would like to set it on record that I have no immediate intention of settling permanently in South Africa. But I *do* want to see again my family and friends – and I do want to make some personal contact with those who are interested in my work.<sup>145</sup>

It is ironic when considering the Union Festival Committee’s stand on ‘suitability’ (read: relevance) that they opted instead to produce Verdi’s *Rigoletto* as a replacement for *Silas Marner*. The Committee, however, offered Joubert a commission for a Festival Overture, which John Joubert refused ‘...not because I wish to harbour resentment, but because I am too busy finishing my opera for its projected English premiere next year.’<sup>146</sup> In yet another twist to this story, this was to be the second première of the opera. Instead, *Silas Marner* had its first production in Cape Town as Chisholm’s initial idea to commission the opera for the College of Music’s Golden Jubilee was revived. The opera was premièred at the University of Cape Town’s Little Theatre on 20 May 1961. The production continued until 27 May 1961, with the College of Music’s Opera School under the baton of Chisholm

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<sup>143</sup> ‘Snubbed South African Composer Rejects Consolation Offer’, *Cape Argus* (1 July 1959), BC 129 25.190.130.

<sup>144</sup> Letter from Joubert to Chisholm (30 May 1959), BC 129 25.189.2(4).

<sup>145</sup> Letter from Joubert to Chisholm (31 July 1959), BC 129 25.189.2(10).

<sup>146</sup> John Joubert quoted in ‘Snubbed South African Composer Rejects Consolation Offer’, *Cape Argus* (1 July 1959), BC 129 25.190.130.

himself. This feat was achieved in spite of difficulties posed by South Africa's limited infrastructure to stage operas with even basic orchestral, choral and staging requirements.<sup>147</sup> It was subsequently performed at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London with the New Opera Company on 10 December 1961. These were the only live performance productions of the opera, although a studio production thereof was broadcasted by the South African Broadcasting Corporation in 1962.<sup>148</sup>

After *Silas Marner*'s much publicized conception history in South Africa, it was perhaps to be expected that the opera's eventual performance would receive considerable attention in the press. The Cape Town production of *Silas Marner* was reviewed by the city's three leading newspapers, namely the *Cape Times*, the *Cape Argus* and *Die Burger*. Cape Town's English newspapers received the opera well, praising Joubert in rather sugar-coated reviews for 'his gift for expressive melody', 'music of unflagging interest'<sup>149</sup> and for composing a '...grand opera breaking into new paths, forsaking melodious arias for solos and concerted items declaimed dramatically at salient points as the plot unfolds.'<sup>150</sup> The reviews by Rosa Nepgen in *Die Burger* were less flattering than that of her English colleagues.<sup>151</sup> Her initial 'preliminary' review was published two days after she attended the performance and commenced with a caveat: '...[a] final judgment of John Joubert's opera *Silas Marner*...would be presumptuous at this stage.'<sup>152</sup> She expressed doubts about the libretto and the effectiveness of the plot and her dismay at the quality of the performance with the exception of a few singers in leading roles. Nevertheless, she also expressed her appreciation of the weaver's song (*wewerslied*), the ball scene (Act II scene i) and the lullaby at the end of Act II scene ii. Her review was followed by another entitled

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<sup>147</sup> Erik Chisholm, 'Silas Marner - the greatest work ever written by a S.A. composer', BC 129 25.190.14(1). This draft of the article was sent to the editor of the *Cape Argus* on 6 May 1961 for publication. It is uncertain whether it was published.

<sup>148</sup> See Spruhan Kennedy, '1<sup>st</sup> Broadcast of Complete Joubert Opera', *SABC Radio Bulletin* (2 April 1962), 11.

<sup>149</sup> Both comments were made by Michael Green, 'Joubert's opera "Silas Marner" made immediate impact at the Little', *The Cape Argus* (22 May 1961).

<sup>150</sup> As is the case when reading many newspaper reviews, the reviewer's comments have to be taken with more than a mere pinch of salt. This questionable review was written by a certain R.M., 'Audience Acclaims Opera by S.A. composer', *Cape Times* (22 May 1961).

<sup>151</sup> The reviews were signed with the initials 'R.N.', which refers to the South African composer Rosa Nepgen. Her husband, W.E.G. Louw was the Art Editor of *Die Burger* from 1957 to 1966. See W.E.G. Louw, 'Nepgen, Rosa', *South African Music Encyclopedia*, ed. Jacques Malan (4 vols., Cape Town, 1984), vol. iii, 286-287. The review was entitled 'Première van Joubert se "Silas Marner"', *Die Burger* (21 May 1961).

<sup>152</sup> 'n Finale oordeel oor John Joubert se opera *Silas Marner*...sou in hierdie stadium miskien voorbarig wees.' All the translations from Afrikaans were made by the present author.

‘First judgment is confirmed’ (*Eerste Oordeel is Bevestig*).<sup>153</sup> Here she elaborated on her initial pronouncements, adding to her list of criticisms Joubert’s attempts at writing ‘popular’ arias, with reference to Godfrey and Dunsey’s duet (I.ii) and Godfrey and Nancy’s duets (II.i and III.i), as well as the last scene of Eppie’s marriage that was likened to ‘a soufflé that had collapsed prematurely’ (*soos ‘n soufflé wat te gou inmekaar gesak het*). Nepgen ascribed this dramatic foundering to the excessive repetition in the music and the libretto.

It is hardly surprising that these remarks did not go unchallenged by *Silas Marner*’s chief advocate, Erik Chisholm. *Die Burger* published a letter of objection Chisholm wrote to the newspaper alongside the reviewer’s responses to it in a lengthy article comprising a third of a page.<sup>154</sup> In his retort of several columns (even after editorial cuts), Chisholm rebutted all Nepgen’s criticisms. The reviewer, however, had the last say in a debate that ended scathingly with accusations of nepotism and poor conducting.

Perhaps the most important observation that could be made from all the Cape Town reviews is the fact that the reader is never allowed to forget that *Silas Marner* is the first full-length opera by a South African composer.<sup>155</sup> This was indeed an important part of the opera’s claim to obtain a commission, funding, media coverage and increase the ticket sales. But it was also perhaps telling of remnants of a colonial frame of mind: while the first ‘South African’ opera marked a certain maturity in the South African art music practices that continued to grow since the Second World War, this achievement was parochial compared to European art music practices. This is proven by the fact that this accomplishment went entirely unnoticed in the British reviews.

Six months after the stir about *Silas Marner* in the South African press had subsided, it emerged in another shape in Britain. Only one night’s performance by the New Opera Workshop at Sadler’s Wells provoked nine reviews in newspapers – no doubt the result of active lobbying for the press’s attention. These reviews were generally more focused on the opera’s musical and dramatic attributes than their South African counterparts. *Silas Marner* was received with reserved praise for its idiomatic vocal

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<sup>153</sup> *Die Burger* (25 May 1961).

<sup>154</sup> ‘Silas Marner: Prof. Erik Chisholm Stel Sy Standpunt; R.N. Lewer Teen-Kommentaar’, *Die Burger* (16 June 1961).

<sup>155</sup> This is especially the case in the press announcement featured in the article ‘Wêreldpremière van Joubert se Nuwe Opera’, *SAUK-Radiobulletin* (22 May 1961), where attention is not only drawn to Joubert’s nationality, but also to the all-South African cast, orchestra and supporting institution, namely the South African College of Music. Interestingly, the article fails to mention the nationalities of the chief motivators, Erik Chisholm and Gregorio Fiasconaro, who were Scottish and Italian respectively.

writing<sup>156</sup> and effective orchestral usage.<sup>157</sup> While it was admittedly not a masterpiece,<sup>158</sup> at least two reviewers considered it on par with operas that received regular performances by minor opera companies in Germany or America.<sup>159</sup> Most British reviewers thought the novel *Silas Marner* was ideal as subject matter for an opera, and Wilfred Mellers even found it astonishing that a South African should be the first to mine the operatic possibilities thereof.<sup>160</sup> An exception was the reviewer for *The Times*, who found the subject matter too melodramatic for twentieth century opera. But then, it has to be said, this is no clear example of twentieth century opera.

Joubert's explicit use of the 'number' opera as a macroform, deriving from the nineteenth-century Verdian and Puccinian lineage, is at odds with the opera's predominantly twentieth century musical idiom. Andrew Porter remarked on the outdated words-to-music-ratio that is typical of earlier operatic conventions: '...to Joubert's 20<sup>th</sup> century music, the characters in *Silas Marner* go on repeating their lines relentlessly as if they had stepped out of *Lucia* or *Il Trovatore*.'<sup>161</sup> Indeed, Joubert described *Silas Marner* as a 'romantic opera',<sup>162</sup> but this label is not adequate to describe all aspects of the opera, as will be discussed later in this chapter. The influences the critics detected in the opera attests to this. Although Wilfred Mellers reported reminiscences of Verdi in the ensembles and big choruses and Puccini in 'moments of lyrical consummation',<sup>163</sup> the names most frequently mentioned in the reviews were those of Stravinsky and Britten. This is hardly surprising, as they were composers who made significant contributions to opera in the mid-twentieth century and it would have been natural for a relatively inexperienced opera composer to use their works as models. Reviewers remarked on *Silas Marner*'s similarities with Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, and even more on the apparent influences of Britten.<sup>164</sup> An apparent 'pastiche' of *The Rake* was heard by one critic in the aria Nancy sings at the opening of Act III and in Joubert's use of ostinato to reinforce

<sup>156</sup> See Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "'Silas Marner' as an Opera', *The Sunday Times* (17 December 1961).

<sup>157</sup> Andrew Porter, 'Silas Marner', *The Financial Times* (12 December 1961).

<sup>158</sup> See Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "'Silas Marner' as an Opera', *The Sunday Times* (17 December 1961).

<sup>159</sup> See Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "'Silas Marner' as an Opera', *The Sunday Times* (17 December 1961) and Andrew Porter, 'Silas Marner', *The Financial Times* (12 December 1961).

<sup>160</sup> Wilfred Mellers, 'Avarice and Alchemy', *The New Statesman* (15 December 1961).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> See John Joubert, 'Silas Marner', *The South African Music Teacher*, 61 (December 1961), 17.

<sup>163</sup> Wilfred Mellers, 'Avarice and Alchemy', *The New Statesman* (15 December 1961).

<sup>164</sup> See the reviews by Norman Kay, 'John Joubert', *The Observer* (17 December 1961); Wilfred Mellers, 'Avarice and Alchemy', *The New Statesman* (15 December 1961) and Andrew Porter, 'Silas Marner', *The Financial Times* (12 December 1961).

tension and climax.<sup>165</sup> None of the reviewers picked up on the underlying morality in the plot that *Silas Marner* and *The Rake* have in common – a somewhat unusual feature in the subject matter of twentieth century opera.<sup>166</sup> Joubert's debt to Britten was more widely recognized. Desmond Shawe-Taylor commented that the greed-motive reminded of Peter Quint's calls to Miles (*The Turn of the Screw*) and the 'dropping arpeggio passages' were reminiscent of *Peter Grimes*,<sup>167</sup> while Wilfred Mellers asserted that Joubert 'shares with Britten a remarkable ability both to invent instrumental figurations that grow from expressive and physical gestures in the action, and to build extended scenes with them.'<sup>168</sup>

Apart from the influences noted in the critical reception of *Silas Marner*, there are more similarities between especially *Peter Grimes* and Joubert's opera that have remained unremarked upon. Both works are so-called 'number-operas'. Both texts that the operas are based on date from the nineteenth century, and in both cases the plot is set in a small village in the nineteenth century. The protagonists of Britten and Joubert are also both outcasts seeking redemption and acceptance by their communities. But here the similarity ends, for Joubert envisages the outcome of this predicament significantly differently from Britten: unlike Grimes, Marner re-establishes his ties with a community. Thus Joubert radically departs from the twentieth-century view of the outcast as a figure who is inevitably doomed and destined for ruin.

It is important to pause here to consider the significance of this departure from twentieth-century convention. Why would it be important to John Joubert to have his protagonist reunited with his community? Could it be that Joubert not only identified with the 'displaced' character of Marner, but that his re-integration within a community also reflected a personal desire? This reading seems confirmed by the importance contemporary British reviewers attached to Joubert's national identity. Four of the nine British reviewers considered it important to mention Joubert's South African nationality.<sup>169</sup> While nationality is hardly a fact that Joubert has ever concealed or denied, it is curious that the reception was not indifferent to the composer's 'outsider' status. This

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<sup>165</sup> Wilfred Mellers, 'Avarice and Alchemy', *The New Statesman* (15 December 1961).

<sup>166</sup> Indeed, Peter Dickenson also notes this similarity between Stravinsky and Joubert: 'Joubert reflects something of Stravinsky's passion for order and moral values...' See 'John Joubert Today', *The Musical Times*, 112 (1971), 20.

<sup>167</sup> Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "'Silas Marner' as an Opera', *The Sunday Times* (17 December 1961).

<sup>168</sup> Wilfred Mellers, 'Avarice and Alchemy', *The New Statesman* (15 December 1961).

<sup>169</sup> See Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "'Silas Marner' as an Opera', *The Sunday Times* (17 December 1961); Percy Cater, 'Success of Silas on a shoestring', *The Daily Mail* (11 December 1961); Wilfred Mellers, 'Avarice and Alchemy', *The New Statesman* (15 December 1961); Philip Hope-Wallace, 'Silas Marner', *The Guardian*, newspaper clipping obtained from John Joubert, despite exhaustive efforts to ascertain the date of this review, neither the newspaper nor any other source could supply a date.



is made more remarkable by the fact that the opera is ‘English’ to the core, including the text on which it is based, its setting in an imaginary English town and the musical idiom from which it derives much inspiration. Yet the identity of *Silas Marner*’s composer seems to infuse the reception of the opera with an irreducible ‘otherness’, which, on some level, might account for the composer’s uncritical endorsement of an emotional consonance in bringing the music and plot to a conclusion, a notion that will be addressed later in this chapter.

After the stir caused by the British production of *Silas Marner* subsided in British newspapers, some afterthoughts on the opera were published in the British journal *Opera*<sup>170</sup> and thereafter in the *Cape Times*.<sup>171</sup> The article in latter newspaper elaborated on the statement that ‘the public deserves to see the opera again’, made in the *Opera* review by Arthur Jacobs. Unfortunately, deserving operas face a higher unlikelihood of a second performance than any other work, for opera productions necessitate an extensive infrastructure, a large cast, chorus and orchestra that imply similarly extensive funding. The possibility that *Silas Marner* would come to a dead end after its première performances was anticipated in the *Cape Times* article by a certain Mr. Lovett of the New Opera Workshop. He placed the responsibility of supporting promising artworks on the country from which the artists originate. He is quoted stating that

...South Africa should sponsor major artistic works by her nationals. If Joubert’s work is to be launched in the way it should be, money is needed. He should have a subsidy either from the Government or from business firms or from private individuals. If his work is worth export prestige – and I feel it is – he must have support. Without this vital second showing Joubert’s very fine work may go no further.<sup>172</sup>

The financial support the opera needed for another staging was never obtained, and the work subsequently has a production/reproduction history of only its two première productions: the Cape Town production that ran for a week and the single performance in

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<sup>170</sup> See ‘The Case of *Silas Marner* or, How Uncountryfied was my Fugato!’, *Opera* vol. 13:2 (February 1962), 92-95. This article gave a review of the *Silas Marner* and a reflection on the criticism it received in the newspaper reviews. The article was moreover a critique of music criticism, in which the reviews of *Silas Marner* were used to lament the poor state of music criticism in British newspapers. This stance was endorsed by the editor of *Opera*, Harold Rosenthal, in a lengthy and controversial editorial postscript.

<sup>171</sup> See Ivor Jones, ‘High Praise for Joubert Opera’, *The Cape Times* (10 March 1962).

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

London. The only other ‘performance’ was a studio production of *Silas Marner* for South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) broadcasts on 6 and 10 April 1962.<sup>173</sup>

The context and reception of *Silas Marner* tell a story of the importance of place in the interpretation of musical meaning. In the different reactions to the work in South Africa, the politics of that country played itself out as a primarily the politics of place. The notion of a ‘South African’ identity was interpreted differently by the Festival Committee (who probably wanted something more Afrikaans and overtly nationalistic), by Chisholm (to whom ties to Britain were important) and to Neppen (who represented a more cosmopolitan Afrikaner nationalism). In England, critical reception was dominated by situating the opera in an existing tradition of operatic work, in other words, of assigning to it a proper historical ‘place’.

### **A story set to music**

The importance that Joubert ascribes to music’s accessibility is strongly voiced in his statement that in *Silas Marner* he ‘...addresses himself to no *avant garde* specialists, but to an audience of ordinary listeners.’<sup>174</sup> This is no doubt aided by the familiarity of the ‘number’ opera form that Joubert employed in *Silas Marner* that invokes the tradition in which opera has been lodged for centuries. Joubert thus pays his tribute to tradition by using a historically contingent, rather than contemporary operatic form:

The musical side of the opera is...traditional in that it accepts the Italian convention of the ‘closed’ number. Arias, duets, ensembles and choruses are linked by more declamatory passages of recitative and arioso which serve to move the drama forward. The musical construction, therefore, owes more to Verdi than to Wagner.<sup>175</sup>

In resisting the Wagnerian conception of the music drama, Joubert resists the through-composed and thus an urgent and unrelenting musical unfolding of the plot. He also avoids musical development in the organically constructed Wagnerian sense. On a certain level it is certainly defensible to state that *Silas Marner* does not inhabit the mythical or the metaphysical worlds of Wagner, while on the other hand the opera does ascribe to a topos that is ‘especially associated with Wagner’, namely that of the woman as redeeming

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<sup>173</sup> See Spruhan Kennedy, ‘1<sup>st</sup> Broadcast of Complete Joubert Opera’, *SABC Radio Bulletin* (2 April 1962).

<sup>174</sup> John Joubert, ‘*Silas Marner*’, *The South African Music Teacher*, 60 (1961), 17.

<sup>175</sup> John Joubert, ‘*Silas Marner* - A programme note by the composer’, draft sent to Erik Chisholm, BC 129 25.190.12(2).

figure.<sup>176</sup> But the listener to *Silas Marner* needs more than these general observations to consider the meaning of this opera and its possible relevance to a discourse of displacement. And it is to a more detailed description of the work that we now turn, first by outlining the synopsis and highlighting some pivotal musical ideas in the unfolding of the opera, and subsequently by developing a critique of particularly interesting and rich selections and their possible relevance to a discourse of displacement.

*Silas Marner*<sup>177</sup> is divided into three acts, and the first act is divided into three scenes. The opera has no overture and starts with a sparse instrumental prelude. The title character, Silas Marner, the weaver of Raveloe, is seen onstage where he is weaving. The prelude commences with alternating notes on D and F in the bass-clarinets, intimating the perpetual movement of the loom. As this configuration always occurs in conjunction with Marner and clearly invokes the repetitive turning of the loom, it will be referred to as the weaving-motive (see top staff of Example 1 below). To the weaving motive is added a sinister theme in the bassoon consisting of consecutive broken triads. The latter signifies Marner's presence throughout the opera,<sup>178</sup> and will be referred to by this author as Marner's theme, seen in the second staff in Example 1 below.

After the brief prelude, Silas Marner (a baritone) is introduced in his cottage by means of the arioso ('This way and that') in which the limited, stepwise movement of the first four bars of Marner's entry intimates the lulling tedium of his weaving. In the quasi-recitative part of the arioso, Marner relates how he fled to Raveloe after being falsely accused of robbing a dying man in Lantern Yard, where he had lived before. Marner, we learn, is a misanthrope shunned by the people of Raveloe, but he has made a 'new friend': the gold he earns through his weaving and parsimoniously hoards, which has assumed a human-like quality to Marner in the absence of human contact. Rumour about Marner's hoarded gold has spread amongst the villagers, as is apparent from the boys' chorus that mockingly asks Marner where his gold is.

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<sup>176</sup> See Christopher Mark, 'Opera in England: Taking the plunge', *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Opera* (Cambridge and New York, 2005), 211.

<sup>177</sup> John Joubert, *Silas Marner: Full Score*, Special Order Edn. (n.p., n.d.). This edition of the opera was digitally scanned in from the composer's autograph by Novello Publishers. It was acquired by the Music Library of the University of Stellenbosch in 2007.

<sup>178</sup> Although this particular formation of the broken triads constitute Marner's theme specifically, the broken triad or seventh-chord figure is one of the most prominent musical building blocks that is used throughout the opera in general without necessarily referring to Marner.

**Example 1:** Weaving-motive (in the bass clarinet, top stave) and Marner's theme (in the bassoon, bottom stave), Act I scene i, Introduction.<sup>179</sup>

Dolly Winthrop arrives to collect the linen she ordered from Marner. She comments on how cold and dark the weaver's cottage is, and Marner retorts with a remarkably tonal setting of the words 'Safe and silent is my home, safe and dark and best alone', each phrase of the sequence concluded with a plagal cadence first in E flat major, then in D flat major. It is significant that the Marner's place of abode seems alien to Winthrop, but 'tonally' secure and anchored in Marner's music. As Winthrop admires the quality of the linen, the first occurrence of what Erik Chisholm termed the 'greed-motive' is heard:<sup>180</sup> a leap of a ninth followed by three notes descending stepwise as shown in Example 2 below.

**Example 2:** Greed-motive, Act I scene i, Dolly Winthrop and Silas Marner's recitative.

<sup>179</sup> Reproduced by permission, Novello & Co. Ltd.

<sup>180</sup> Erik Chisholm, 'John Joubert's "Silas Marner"', *The Musical Times* vol. 102 no. 1423 (September 1961), 550-551.

When Winthrop pays Marner, the clarinet plays a rapid ascending and descending arpeggio that is associated with gold throughout the opera, seen in the top stave of Example 3 against a part of Marner's initial aria in the bassoon. Chisholm does not explicitly call this figuration the gold-motive, but he acknowledges the rapidly ascending and descending arpeggios' continual association with gold in the opera.<sup>181</sup>

**Example 3:** Gold-motive (in the bass clarinet, top stave), Act I Scene i, Marner and Mrs. Winthrop's recitative 'Cold it is'.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Bass Clarinet (Bass Cl.) and Bassoon (Fag.). The top staff, for Bass Cl., features a rapid ascending and descending arpeggio pattern in treble clef, marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The bottom staff, for Fag., shows a recitative line in bass clef, marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and labeled 'I. SOLO'. The recitative consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes with various accidentals, including sharps and naturals, and is marked with accents and slurs.

In Mrs. Winthrop's sung words, 'Living alone here, you must lose count of time', the relativity or vagueness of time in the displaced condition is elicited. After she leaves, Marner celebrates his 'new friend', the gold, in an aria 'Good gold, kind gold' referred to as a *brindisi* by Chisholm.<sup>182</sup> He uncannily attributes human qualities to the lifeless substance; the gold replaces (or displaces?) relationships with actual people. The orchestral interlude that follows as Marner stows away the gold makes use of 'glittering' arpeggios in the woodwinds, celesta and piano as well as harp glissandi to portray the gold (an elaboration of the gold-motive mentioned earlier), while the upper strings play the greed-motive. Marner ends the scene with a brief, appeasing recapitulation of 'Safe and silent is my home...', with the greed-motive without its first leap continuing in the woodwinds.

Scene two is set in a room at the Rainbow Inn. Godfrey and Dunsey, the village squire's two sons, discuss their predicament in repaying the tenant Fowler's rent to the squire, which they had collected, but Dunsey had spent. In a salacious aria, 'Get you turned out or tell the squire', Dunsey blackmails Godfrey to repay the money by threatening to tell the squire of Godfrey's secret marriage to Molly Farren, described by Dunsey as an 'exquisite slut'.<sup>183</sup> Not only was Molly a drunkard, but the marriage also

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 550.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Eliot alludes to the fact that Molly had been a barmaid, thus belonging to the working class, when she describes Molly's thoughts to be '...inhabited by no higher memories than those of a barmaid's paradise of

meant a scandalous transgression of class expectations and roles. In the subsequent recitative Dunsey proposes that he sell Godfrey's horse, Wildfire, at the hunt the next day to obtain the money. Godfrey objects. A dance will be held the next evening, and his current object of fancy, Nancy Lammeter, would be present. Godfrey declares his love for Nancy and regrets his marriage with Molly, while Dunsey mocks him. The recitative flows into a sentimental duet, 'Nancy, I loved you when we met' (discussed later in the chapter), before Godfrey finally agrees to let Dunsey sell Wildfire. The scene ends with Godfrey's despair over his impossible love for Nancy 'unless Fate takes [his] part' by ridding him of Molly.

The third scene of act one commences with an orchestral prelude while the stage remains dark. Far-away hunting calls are heard, first in the second horn, imitated by the first horn an augmented fourth higher, to which the second horn's call is then added. While this pattern is repeated, the greed-motive sounds in the upper strings. The lights gradually fade in and illuminates the empty interior of Marner's cottage, which is presently entered by Dunsey. From Dunsey's recitative we learn that Wildfire fell because Dunsey rode him too hard and that the horse is now dead, leaving Dunsey desperate for money. Mindful of the village rumours about Marner's gold, Dunsey starts searching for it and eventually finds it under a loose stone at the hearth. Dunsey takes the money and quickly exits. The orchestra plays a short interlude that features the weaving-motive in the celli and a new theme with distinctive quaver-semiquaver rest-semiquaver rhythms in the upper strings, eliciting much the same effect as dotted rhythms, with the semiquaver phrased with the following quaver to create a 'sighing' effect. Soon after Dunsey's exit, Marner arrives at the cottage. He prepares supper, and then decides to take out his gold coins – his 'friends' – to keep him company during his meal. When he finds the gold gone, he starts searching frantically and shouts for the gold to come out. Eventually he rushes out of his cottage (offstage). The scene ends with dramatic descending tutti scale passages.

Act Two consists of two scenes. The first takes place at Squire Cass's Hall during a New Year's party. An exuberant orchestra and chorus opening number, 'Ev'ry year brings round the day', sets the festive mood,<sup>184</sup> after which the principle characters of this scene

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pink ribbons and gentlemen's jokes.' George Eliot, *Silas Marner, the weaver of Raveloe*, ed. David Carroll (London and New York, 1996), 107.

<sup>184</sup> Once again, the different groupings of the 3/4 time signature is of interest: the upper strings' and trumpets' groupings display the conventional three groups of two quavers, whereas the lower strings, bassoon and trombones feature two groups of three quavers.

are introduced in a recitative: Squire Cass, the host of the party, his daughter, Nancy (the object of Godfrey's undeclared and impossible love), and Dr. Kimble, a guest at the party. Dr. Kimble sings a short 'aria' much reminiscent of a folksong ('When I was a lad') and is joined in his singing by the squire, Godfrey and the chorus. When the squire prompts Nancy and Godfrey to dance, the fiddler plays another folksong, 'The Flaxen-Headed Ploughboy' upon which the guests start to dance and sing along, followed the melancholy 'Over the Hills and Far Away' and the lively 'Sir Roger de Coverley'. Aside from the crowd, Nancy laments the fact that Godfrey does not disclose his feelings for her in a *cabaletta*, 'I'll never say I love, I'll never show it'. As she concludes, Godfrey enters the room in search of her. When Nancy accuses him of indifference, Godfrey answers in a sudden melodramatic outburst that the dance meant more to him 'than all the pleasures of the world'. They confess their feelings to each other in a sentimental duet, 'Trust me Nancy', that will be discussed later in the present chapter.

A servant interrupts their euphoria by calling for the doctor to tend to a drunken woman found in the snow. Dr. Kimble, the Squire and the villager leave to attend to the woman after the Squire orders the party to resume. The guests recommence their singing with 'All on a winter's evening', but the initially joyous song becomes dark and foreboding owing to the orchestra's more dissonant accompaniment. Notably, the change from major to minor on the words 'the moon, the moon' helps to create an ominous atmosphere. Godfrey, still at the party, wonders if the drunken woman might be Molly and whether she might be dead. He rushes out to join Dr. Kimble and the Squire and the stage is left empty with the chorus's singing heard from afar (offstage). The lights fade out along with the sound of the voices.

While the stage is enveloped in darkness, the scene changes to the inside of Marner's cottage. The orchestra plays a recapitulation of Marner's initial arioso as a prelude to the new scene, and as the orchestral music ends, Marner enters with a load of wood. In his plaintive recitative he claims that the New Year's bells hold no joy for him, as they would not return his beloved gold. The gold-motive is heard in the woodwinds and the piano; it grows louder and more insistent as the golden light shimmering at the hearth brightens to light up a child's figure. Marner at last sees the golden shimmer and assumes with rapture that his treasured gold has returned. Upon closer inspection, however, he identifies the golden hues as a the golden hair of a child.

Marner's discovery is interrupted by a knock on the door. From outside, Dr. Kimble's voice is heard: he requests the use of Silas's cottage to nurse the woman they

found in the snow. Marner lets them in, and Dr. Kimble, the Squire, the villager and Godfrey enter the weaver's cottage with the seemingly lifeless and still unidentified woman. Once inside, Kimble examines the woman and Godfrey, peeking over the doctor's shoulder, recognizes the woman as Molly, but keeps this information to himself. The Squire tells Marner that the woman was rumoured to have a child, and Marner deliberately ignores this comment. The doctor pronounces the woman (Molly) dead. The five characters sing a quintet in the style of a funeral march, 'This is the end', in which the Squire, Dr. Kimble and the villager lament the woman's death, Marner expresses his right to keep the child and Godfrey mourns the end of his secret marriage. As the ensemble ends, the villager notices the child in Marner's chair. The Squire is about to take the child, but is countered by Marner's insistence to keep her. Despite the objections that Marner, a poor bachelor, is not fit to care for the child, Marner maintains that the child should be his as compensation for his lost gold. This dispute is dramatically played out in a recapitulation of Marner's 'Good gold, kind gold'-aria, now set to the libretto 'She came to me...' and adapted for the vocal quintet. Towards the end of the quintet, Godfrey realizes that he is free to court and marry Nancy. The number concludes with the agreement that Marner will keep the child. Content with the outcome of the argument, Marner rocks the child to sleep whilst singing a serene lullaby. The end of the lullaby signals the end of act two.

The third act's first scene commences to a contemplative flute solo, based on broken seventh-chords in c minor and prominent quaver-semiquaver rest-semiquaver rhythms on the first pulse of the bar (see Example 6 below). This figuration again anticipates the dramatic turn of events about to be played out in this scene.

**Example 4:** Quaver-semiquaver rest-semiquaver rhythms, Act III scene i, Introduction.

Moderato

1. SOLO

Flute

*p*

*poco accel. .... a tempo*



It is sixteen years later, and Nancy is alone in the Hall. Similar to the opening of Act I, Act III begins with a theme played by a solo instrument (although here without any accompaniment) and the voice is added as a 'counter theme' that complements the first theme. Nancy recounts the happenings of the past sixteen years in a long recitative with listless accompaniment: Eppie, Silas Marner's 'daughter', is revealed to be good-natured and pretty, and has changed Marner completely for the better. Nancy and Godfrey, we learn, are childless and Godfrey had wanted to adopt Eppie, a wish Nancy neither understood nor was willing to contemplate.

After this long declamation, the orchestra's postlude to Nancy's recitative becomes increasingly urgent by means of an *accelerando*, an ascending scale in broken thirds and the repetition of tones at the climax. Godfrey enters the Hall and announces the shocking news that Dunsey's body was found in the stone-pits with Marner's gold. Another revelation is also made: Godfrey confesses to Nancy that the woman found in the snow sixteen years previously was his wife and that Eppie is his biological daughter. In the duet that follows, 'What words could I use', Godfrey tries to explain the circumstances that forced him to hide the truth and Nancy laments his deception. After the duet, Nancy forgives Godfrey and decides that the child must live with them. Thus Eppie will become the vehicle of redemption for Godfrey's past wrongs and appease their disappointment at not having children of their own. Godfrey and Nancy's resolution is set to scale passages in contrary motion to each other, accompanied by major or minor triads, in contrast with the comparative dissonance of their preceding duet. In the subsequent recitative, Godfrey expresses his fears that Eppie will reject him. Nancy and Godfrey exits and the curtain falls.

Scene two opens with a crowd of excited villagers (the chorus) gathered in front of Marner's cottage and discussing the rumours that Marner's gold was found with the body of the Squire's son, Dunsey, at the bottom of a pit ('They say it's found, the weaver's gold'). Marner appears from the cottage and confirms their suspicions. In his aria 'Last night they found the stolen gold again', he declares the found treasure the dead man's gold. He remembers what the gold had meant to him, and now recognizes the qualities that he attributed to the gold as deceptions. It is clear from the chorus, 'For money's money', that the people of Raveloe do not understand what Marner had said; for them gold is always the same, a constant, unchanging entity. When Marner re-enters his cottage, a bright solo violin passage (with light orchestral accompaniment) signals Eppie's entrance. The motives of descending broken seventh-chords are similar to the ascending broken

seventh-chords of Nancy's aria at the beginning of Act III, but conveys a much brighter mood (see Example 7 below). This is a curious musical link to establish, as Nancy and Eppie has no direct dramatic bearing on each other.

**Example 5:** Broken chord figure, Act III scene ii, Introduction to Eppie's recitative.



Eppie announces her wish to marry Aaron, and calms Marner's distress at the thought of 'losing' her by expressing her and Aaron's intention to live with him in the cottage. At that moment, Godfrey and Nancy enter. Godfrey apologizes for his brother's crimes, whereupon Marner answers that it happened a long time ago, accompanied by a stable, consonant chord (A-flat major triad). In contrast, Godfrey and Nancy are musically represented by more unsettling chords built with intervals of fourths. When Godfrey hints at his intent to take Eppie, Marner's tonal language becomes markedly more dissonant. After Godfrey and Nancy's offer for Eppie to live with them, Godfrey and Nancy express their wishes and Eppie her fears in a trio ('You have this child'): Godfrey and Nancy try to convince her, but Eppie finds it unthinkable to leave her adoptive father. Although Marner allows her the choice, Eppie declines the offer. Godfrey then discloses his kinship to her and Marner admonishes him for having had kept this information quiet for sixteen years in a reprise of the 'you should have spoken' theme from Godfrey and Nancy's recitative in the first scene of Act III. A dispute starts between the four characters in a quartet. Eppie speaks the last word on the matter and finally declines the offer of the Casses, who bitterly take their leave.

The offstage singing of villagers breaks the tense mood and commences the last, celebrative part of the opera. Aaron, who has asked to marry Eppie, comes onstage and offers Eppie flowers. A passacaglia, in which the chorus, Silas, Eppie and Aaron feature, concludes the opera. Eppie, Aaron and the chorus leave the stage so that Marner remains alone.

## A series of displacements

John Joubert's *Silas Marner* speaks to the notion of displacement on many levels. First, we will turn to the most evident level on which the theme plays out, namely the plot. Despite the simplification of the novel in its conversion to libretto, the opera's rendition of the plot retained some aspects of displacement mostly in the significance of the characters, the changes in their lives and their places in society, be it their physical abodes or their social stature. Eliot's novel and Joubert's opera differ on the point of Marner's initial physical relocation. According to the former, Marner's exile from Lantern Yard was a voluntary action: '...not long afterwards [Sarah's marriage to William Dane] it was known to the brethren in Lantern Yard that Silas Marner had departed from the town.'<sup>185</sup> whereas the latter depicts Marner's relocation as banishment, employing the words 'they drove me out...'.<sup>186</sup> Notwithstanding differences of emphasis, however, this displacement is a literal movement from one place to another, and it is no coincidence that Marner's relocation was to the Stone Pits outside Raveloe. On a figurative level, it is implied that Marner found himself banished from his community only to find himself socially alienated and shunned by the people of Raveloe. The name 'Stone Pits' also conjures up images of an arduous and difficult life, which is musically portrayed especially in the first scene of Act I, where the compound meter with a Moderato tempo marking and predominantly minor key of the music intimates the tedium of Marner's weaving and his life. This depiction is especially noticeable if contrasted with the liveliness in the following Allegro section in simple meter and in a predominantly major key that depicts the first encounter with Godfrey in the next scene.

Godfrey's situation is in many respects defined by the notion of displacement, but in a very different way to that of Marner. On a surface level, the place where Godfrey belongs, namely the Hall at the Red House, denotes his place in society: a dignified, spacious location (as opposed to Marner's small, commoner's cottage on the outskirts of town). Godfrey resists social and physical displacement by not being truthful about his secret marriage and his child. Indeed, Godfrey's security of social standing is maintained by his own lies, whereas Marner's physical displacement is caused by the lies of others. Ironically, Godfrey's marriage suffers in spite of his deceit to safeguard his 'place' in society while Marner finds eventual happiness.

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<sup>185</sup> George Eliot, *Silas Marner, the weaver of Raveloe*, 14.

<sup>186</sup> John Joubert, *Silas Marner*, I.i., 14-5.

Godfrey's crossing the class border results in another case of displacement, Eppie. As the illegitimate child of Godfrey, she is not entitled to the privileges associated with her upper-class parentage (at least from Godfrey's side), and the ambivalence of her social stature is emphasized when she is brought up as an orphan by a stranger. Marner, her adoptive father, is of course also an outsider to the community and in addition to that a bachelor, a person commonly deemed inappropriate to raising a child. Eppie becomes pivotal in the plot as a series of displacements unfold. Marner's exile from Lantern Yard becomes the reason for his attachment to gold as a substitute for social relations. The gold is eventually 'replaced' by Eppie, whom the weaver first mistook for his missing gold, and through Eppie, Marner's ties with the community he lives in are eventually re-established. When Eppie is about to marry and 'leave' her adoptive father, Marner's gold is found and the plot comes full circle.

But Eppie is also pivotal in Godfrey's fate. Godfrey's untruthfulness comes to the fore as he realizes that his redemption from his tormenting silence is located in telling the truth about Eppie, rectifying his past wrongs and risking disgrace in adopting her as his own. It is ironic that Eppie, a child conceived amid lies and deceit, is a symbol of innocence and purity and becomes the vessel of redemption for both Godfrey and Marner: a return to truth and innocence for the former, and a regaining of social stature and belonging for the latter. Indeed, it could be argued that Eppie – a socially ambivalent, 'displaced' character – is the transforming mechanism of this story.

At this point, one may validly wonder if and how these notions of displacement are expressed in the music. First of all it needs to be said that there is no identifiable 'displacement' or 'alienation' musical theme or motive. In most cases the motives function as building blocks for the music in general and create structural unity rather than being representative of specific ideas. A case in point is the consecutive minor third melodic intervals a semitone apart that occur when the boys mock Marner in Act I scene i as well as in the introduction to the 'Good gold, kind gold' aria later in the scene. While the repetition of the motive in different contexts is obvious, the instances where it is employed are not linked by the plot or the characters any way. This is also true of the broken seventh-chords that form the accompaniment to Nancy and Eppie's recitatives in Act III, as has been mentioned earlier. In the case of the greed-motive, however, the motive can be linked to a specific meaning but has also been used outside a context related to that meaning. It is first heard when it is set to Marner's words 'so I came to Raveloe' in his opening arioso. While the intention of the motive's association with greed is reinforced

in all subsequent occurrences of the motive, this first and crucial hearing thereof cannot be linked to this idea.

But not all the themes and motives occur partially or wholly arbitrarily. The reiteration of the gold and greed motives is employed extremely effectively (if obviously) when Marner finds Eppie, intimating Eppie's substitution of the gold. The same idea is conveyed by the reprise of the 'Good gold, kind gold' aria, now for quintet with the words 'She came to me', when Marner argues to keep the child. For all its symbolic effectiveness, however, neither the gold nor the greed motive accompanies Eppie's appearance in the last Act. But then, characterisation through themes or motives is not the rule in *Silas Marner*. In fact, only Marner has a particular designated theme that represents him throughout the opera; the other characters' themes do not recur with their every appearance or association.

While displacement is not a deliberate thematic or motivic musical presence in the opera, it is not entirely absent from the music either. As this chapter will argue, it manifests in less obvious influences, musical applications or pertinent absences. This will be explored in the following sections.

### **Musical redemption without religion**

George Eliot's *Silas Marner* lends weight to this reading of the opera plot as one to which displacement is central. As Eliot describes it, '...Marner's inner life had been a history and a metamorphosis, as that of every fervid nature must be when it has fled, or been condemned to solitude.'<sup>187</sup> Not least of these metamorphoses is Marner's protean position towards religion and the church. The thematic importance that religiosity occupies in the novel renders the absence of this theme in the opera conspicuous. The opera fails to mention Marner's active involvement with a sect in Lantern Yard, which, as the name suggests, symbolizes an enlightened environment and society. The failure of the sect to 'illuminate' the falseness of the accusation against Marner is hence fraught with irony.

Religion indeed becomes a divisive factor for Marner in Raveloe, where he divests himself from religion at first, and thereby increases the separation between himself and Raveloe's conservative, religious community. As Marner starts to explore Raveloe's religious practices for the sake of Eppie, he discovers that the church practices in Raveloe

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<sup>187</sup> George Eliot, *Silas Marner, the weaver of Raveloe*, 9.

differ greatly from those he was accustomed to in Lantern Yard, thus bringing another discrepancy between his past and his present to the fore. In Marner's adoption of Raveloe's religious practices for the benefit of Eppie, religion becomes an instrument of Marner's redemption through the levelling of the difference that separated him from Raveloe's society. Religion could thus be regarded as a new 'place' of belonging for Marner as it represents his past and present. This 'place' hosts a reconciliation of the past injustices against him inflicted by the church by the present process of social restoration enabled through the church.

But for Eliot, Raveloe's religion is inseparable from its superstitions. This, too, is left untouched by the opera. Neither Marner's supposed gift of healing nor his stupors are mentioned in the opera. With the exception of the boys' chorus mocking the weaver in the first scene of Act one, the rumours and superstitions surrounding Marner are entirely absent from Joubert's setting of the novel. Eliot relates the incidences that provoked the rumours in the first chapter of the novel and thereby achieves a depth of character that adds significance to the events that unfold in the plot. The history of Marner as a kind of retrospective narrative is difficult to stage for obvious practical reasons: another set, more characters and theatrical devices to suggest time-lapses would be needed. It is therefore a logical omission to make in the conversion of the novel to the opera.

And yet the particular omissions of religion and superstition have profound implications for the drama and credibility of the opera. If more information regarding Marner's history before settling in Raveloe would render more depth to his character, it is also true that his transformation without this added knowledge attains less credibility than it could potentially achieve, and thereby, the redemption afforded by Eppie is diminished. But more importantly, religion, religious redemption and superstition are themes that would have connected *Silas Marner* to a Romantic operatic lineage in which Wagner (one thinks of *Parsifal*) is most prominent – a legacy the composer (perhaps unconsciously?) eschewed in his use of the Verdian operatic form of the 'closed number'. While it could indeed be argued that *Silas Marner* conveys the idea of redemption clearly, it does not attain the intensity and conviction in the redemption of its protagonist as does *Parsifal* or even *Tristan und Isolde*. The loss of intensity is in part related to Joubert's use of the more traditional operatic structure.

## The structure and aesthetic of nostalgia

While the number opera might be literally fractured, it is a well-established and recognisable structure which would appeal to a broad audience. It is less disturbing and penetrating than the through-composed music drama of Wagner that does not allow the audience a moment of respite. It keeps the drama at an arm's length, affording the audience the possibility of an escape from involvement with what is portrayed on stage. What is lacking in this form is thus the dramatic urgency that operatic form had acquired in the wake of Wagner. The lack of dramatic urgency is all the more keenly felt because *Silas Marner* deals with matters like redemption and salvation.

If the operatic macrostructure is suggestive of a fissure or ambivalence in the creation of a discrepancy between content and form, it is not the only ambivalence present in this opera. The way Joubert uses themes and motives also belongs to a dated practice, where it is treated mostly as general musical building blocks instead of devices depicting characters or ideas, as was discussed before. Even the themes or motives that are associated with characters or ideas, such as Marner's theme or the greed or gold motives, do not develop as its associations change and grow, as is the case with leitmotif; it remains oddly static.

This conception of operatic form and its constitutive musical components provokes an idiomatic critique that necessitates an inquiry into the 'cultural weight' it can bear given the content that it seeks to convey. Perhaps it is significant, and even suggestive, that Joubert's adopts an operatic convention not so laden with the discourses of nationalism and exclusivity that burden the Wagnerian form. It is suggestive of a more cosmopolitan, 'fresh' take on opera, despite of the long tradition of the 'number' form that preceded it.

However, operatic themes and connotations are not aspects that Joubert entirely shied away from, intentionally or unintentionally. In addition to addressing the theme of redemption that is much associated with Wagner, Joubert explicitly aligns *Silas Marner* with *Wozzeck* and *Peter Grimes* in addressing the problem of the outcast. He states that:

[i]n *Wozzeck* and *Peter Grimes* the outcast is presented in each case as a creature without hope of redemption or salvation: both are victims of something which seems to lie outside their own personal control: both take their own lives by drowning. In *Silas Marner* I saw the possibility of

presenting the other side of this picture: there *is* a reason for Silas's predicament, and there is a solution to it; and in this solution lies the moral of the story.<sup>188</sup>

Can a composer, however, significantly contribute to this operatic subject-matter in an idiom that does not allow the dramatic forces to supersede the constant reminder of the superficiality of the form in which the drama is presented? Certainly the divide between action (recitative) and contemplation (aria), the repetition of lines or the use of the chorus as a musical effect ('brought on just to supply choral music') would continually remind a twentieth-century audience of the superficiality of events.<sup>189</sup> Musically speaking, the non-developing motives Joubert utilizes belies his criticism of *Wozzeck* and *Peter Grimes* on the grounds that '...*Wozzeck* and *Peter Grimes* ... are essentially the same characters when they depart this life as when they first appear on the stage.'<sup>190</sup> Neither the structural nor musical means exist in *Silas Marner* to achieve a successful musical representation of transformation and redemption. But more significant is the vocal style that is evoked in the arias, duets and ensembles of *Silas Marner*. These 'numbers' are reminiscent of the vocal aesthetic exemplified in the arias of Verdi and Puccini: easily memorable melodies particularly bent on showcasing the voice. In the twentieth century however, this portrayal of the voice seems like fanciful reminiscences of after *Moses und Aron* and *Wozzeck*, evoking a bygone era that only remains accessible through nostalgia. Gary Tomlinson's diagnosis of Puccini seems applicable here:

The taint of bad faith in our enjoyment of Puccini...has to do with the broadest interaction between his works and the context in which they circulate...[The] brief, culminating melodic distillations, distantly descended from the intense vocalism of the *primo ottocento* cabaletta, harken back to an era when the noumenal cry seemed plausible. They bring us face to face with a force we can believe only through a wilfully nostalgic engagement.<sup>191</sup>

It is indeed in showcases of vocalism, the arias and duets, that *Silas Marner* loses much of its credibility. This point will be returned to later in this chapter.

To be sure, Joubert's use of a conservative, somewhat obsolete aesthetic (as especially exemplified in his vocal settings) is not unique among South African

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<sup>188</sup> John Joubert, 'Famous Novel as an Opera', *Music and Musicians*, 10.4 (December 1961), 19.

<sup>189</sup> These elements are, according to Arthur Jacobs, typical of the traditional 'closed' number operatic form. See 'The case of *Silas Marner*, or, How Uncountryfied was my Fugato', *Opera*, 13:2 (February 1962), 93.

<sup>190</sup> John Joubert, 'Under Western Eyes', *The Musical Times*, 110 (1969), 473.

<sup>191</sup> See 'The sum of Modernity', *Metaphysical Song: an Essay on Opera* (Princeton and Chichester, 1999), 148-9.



composers. However, as an opera with displacement, redemption and salvation at its thematic centre, this aesthetic acquires added significance. For a composer to aspire to audience acceptance in the mid-twentieth century was never an inevitable course of action. One could argue that for a South African composer to do so abroad in an opera that thematizes displacement and redemption, could hardly not be read as a biographical imperative as much as an aesthetic one. And for the same composer to wish for the same effect 'at home' signals an affirmation of 'roots' that have remained intact, of a divide that has been bridged successfully and the transformation of the composer as the bridge between the centre and periphery.

But the nostalgia is not only located in the musical aesthetic employed in the opera. It is also present in the selection of subject matter, derived from Eliot's novel that celebrated its centenary by the time the opera was completed. Although the play *Woyzeck* by Georg Büchner on which the opera *Wozzeck* is based, dates from 1837, and George Crabbe's poem *The Borough*, on which the idea of *Peter Grimes* was based, from 1810, these texts are exponents of naturalism and hence appeal to twentieth century operatic inclinations that 'tended to prefer a direct relation to the real world'.<sup>192</sup> While Eliot employed realism in all her novels, it was a realism of an environment and lifestyle that was already then fast transforming, and already conveys the impression of a metaphorical time or timelessness, the feeling of 'once upon a time' which could be made applicable to any situation. This is facilitated by the portrayal of characters which remains truthful to the nature of mankind, and thus represents a timeless depiction of human encounters from which a certain morality is derived. It is notable that Joubert's other major operatic endeavours, namely *Under Western Eyes* and *Jane Eyre* have similar moral ambitions. However, in none of these operas are there any hints that Joubert writes self-consciously, as criticism or commentary on what has been done before. Joubert's work is not compositional practice as criticism, it is composition as moral contribution to society. By inscribing redemption, return and re-integration into society in the fate of his protagonist, Silas Marner, (as well as in the case of Razumov in *Under Western Eyes* and Jane in *Jane Eyre*), Joubert contributes positively to society by allowing 'his' outcasts different outcomes to those of their twentieth-century counterparts.

Yet optimism is a difficult feat to achieve in twentieth-century music, 'a musical language that found affirmation and positive resolution far more problematic than did the

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<sup>192</sup> Arnold Whittall, 'Opera: The 20<sup>th</sup> century: 20<sup>th</sup> century topics', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 18 June 2008 ), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

language of the essentially tonal, consonant past.’<sup>193</sup> Perhaps this is where the Verdian form was a solution to this predicament, at least structurally. It brought Joubert closer to a tradition where positive endings *were* conceivable and commonplace. In this reading the form of the opera is indeed functional, but the function is again understood as serving a form of socio-biographical imperative, rather than a musically conceived one.

### **Faking it: impossible narratives of love**

A similar predicament to that of the ‘positive ending’ is the representation of love in twentieth-century opera. Love becomes an increasingly problematic theme in an essentially pessimistic creative era, where psychoanalysis, naturalism (in opera ‘translated’ to *verismo*), expressionism and neo-classicism shape art’s thematic repertoire. Caroline Harvey asserts that ‘...the reality of human experience had profoundly shifted away from psychological unity towards fragmentation, conflict and the emergence of the unconscious drives from repression ... [A]ll suggest that the divided individual represented reality.’<sup>194</sup> These representations of the individual no longer provide a viable platform for the innocent, selfless love that so many operas portrayed in the nineteenth century. The dominance that love was afforded in nineteenth-century opera is replaced by sexuality in the twentieth century, and Joubert’s uncritical invocation of a nineteenth century conception thereof seems naïve.

Musically speaking, it is when dealing with representations of love and ending that *Silas Marner* loses much of its credibility, a problem area for twentieth century composers John Joubert was indeed aware of.<sup>195</sup> His solution was a tonal portrayal of both, in rather stark contrast with the musical idiom of extended tonality generally used in the rest of the opera. Two duets relating to this naïve type of love can be singled out, namely Godfrey and Dunsey’s duet ‘Nancy, I loved you when we met’ in Act I scene ii and Godfrey and Nancy’s duet ‘Trust me Nancy’ in Act II scene i. Godfrey and Dunsey’s duet in Act I (attached as Appendix I, p. 102)<sup>196</sup> follows their dispute about the money that is owed to

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> ‘Words and actions’, *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge and New York, 2005), 48.

<sup>195</sup> Personal interview with John Joubert at his home in Moseley, Birmingham, 22 July 2008.

<sup>196</sup> The music reprinted here as Appendices is reproduced with permission of Novello. Every effort was made to improve the quality of the reproductions, but the limitations in reproductions included in this thesis derive in most instances from the quality of the copies supplied by Novello. The page numbers of the score has been preserved for the sake of authenticity of the reproductions.

the Squire and disclosure of Godfrey's secret marriage to Molly. The duet starts with Godfrey singing of his love for Nancy in a clear E major nineteenth-century tonal idiom accompanied by a solo cello passage in a stereotypical romantic expression of emotion that reinforces Godfrey's amorous singing. Godfrey's declaration of love is interjected by Dunsey, who acts as Godfrey's conscience in his interceptions of Godfrey's theme, reminding Godfrey of the love he initially felt for Molly (see Appendix I, p. 106 from the third bar). Dunsey's musical interjections could suggest a deliberate sugar-coating of the musical idiom that clads it with irony and parody. But while an interpretation of the duet as a parody is plausible, it is also improbable. Little in the music (including the accompaniment by strings, solo cello, violin and oboe passages) hint that the duet is intended other than seriously. Perhaps it is the twentieth-century's incredulity at this kind of naïvely sentimental writing that provokes immediate scepticism?

Suspensions of the Joubert's serious intentions with the duet's nineteenth century idiom are however confirmed upon a closer look at Godfrey and Nancy's duet in Act II. Godfrey's appeal for Nancy's trust (attached as Appendix II, p. 109) is musically portrayed in the heavily stereotyped 'noble' sound of the horn's counter theme, gentle syncopated accompaniment figures in the strings intimating breathless, unrequited love and a mostly stepwise moving vocal writing that draws emphasis to the emotionally-laden leaps that invites portamento on the part of the singer. It offers no possibility of being interpreted as anything else than serious and genuine.

Godfrey and Nancy's duet in the last act curiously deviates from the sentimentality in the two duets described above – this could hardly be described as a love duet. Godfrey disclosed his secret marriage to Nancy in the preceding recitative and in the duet 'What words could I use', and is now pleading for Nancy's understanding (attached as Appendix III, p. 114). The tonal language is markedly different from that of their duet in Act II. A recognizable key, F minor, is implied by the celli, which moves in fourths. The upper strings play major chords in first inversion that 'float' through different keys over the cello part in the established key, F minor. The pattern in the strings' moving chords is an interval of a second followed by an interval of a third, allowing easy manoeuvring to more remote keys on Nancy's words 'and such a wrong was never worth the cost'. It is evident that a musical development has taken place, representing the couple's development during their sixteen years of marriage. The extended tonality of the music suggests the complexity of the emotions that have accumulated since their idealistic love during their courtship. This musical portrayal is not only suitable to the plot, but seems to outline an

intentional character development in the opera. This also serves to underscore the deliberate use of tonality in the duets of the first and second acts described above and confirm the suspicion that the tonal, sentimental musical setting of the duets could not have been accidental. And if it is neither accidental nor parodied, the style of the love arias indicates a transgression of taste in service of an idea of 'love' that is striking in its hope for reconciliation and redemption.

As to the positive ending of the opera, Joubert again turns to conventional tonality and a historical form, the passacaglia, to portray this seemingly impossible conclusion in the context of the twentieth century. Certainly some elements of the music betray their contemporaneous origin, as evidenced by the more dissonant chords played by the violins and violas twenty-five bars before the end of the opera. But mostly, the harmonic treatment is tonal and in a distinct key of D major. The bass line supporting the passacaglia outlines the minor seventh chord on the supertonic in a descending motion, which is followed sequentially by a tonic major seventh chord. Silas, Eppie, Aaron and the chorus's parts are typically contrapuntal and imitative. The music has a ceremonious, almost sacred character befitting of the moral triumph in the conclusion of the opera: all ends happily and righteousness prevails for those deserving of it; Godfrey is denied redemption as a rebuke for his weakness of character in being untruthful. But can the twentieth- (and twenty first-) century audience still find such a neat conclusion credible after *Wozzeck*, *Grimes*, *Salome* and so many others? Joubert's answer would no doubt be 'yes', and it is an answer that rests on a belief that his musical language could reconcile not only the fate of his outcasts, but also the fate of tonality in the twentieth century. In this sense his own (musical) voice is redeemed, as is his 'place' as a primarily tonal, anti-avant garde composer.

### **Instrumental music as 'authentic' contemporary 'place'**

It is important to note that some of Joubert's most effective music is to be found in the instrumental interludes and orchestrally dominated recitatives, such as the orchestral interlude between Act III Scene i and ii and Dunsey's search for Marner's gold in Act I Scene iii respectively. In both cases, a more 'modern' compositional approach is used, as is especially apparent in the use of polytonality, the layering of themes and motives and the orchestration. The orchestral accompaniment in Dunsey's search for Marner's gold in Act I Scene iii ('All dark in here...', attached as Appendix IV, p. 121) opens as the celli,

double basses and piano play punctuated ascending broken-chord motives (derived from Marner's initial aria), followed by the horns playing muted chords on which the musical movement stalls for a moment. The latter cues Dunsey's entry to the recitative. The use of ascending, faster growing broken chords plucked by the strings (see for instance p. 122), implying Dunsey's nervousness and the stalling on the horns' biting minor triads (see the first two bars on p. 123) create a tenuous, uncanny sound quality. The syncopated descending thirds in the flutes recall the similar flute passage when Dolly Winthrop entered Marner's cottage in Act I Scene i, intimating apprehension (refer to the last two bars of p. 123, for instance). The constantly ascending harmonies increase the tension. It is not hard to imagine Dunsey tiptoeing cautiously in Marner's cottage; the music is visually evocative. As the plan to 'loan' (or more accurately, 'steal') Marner's gold occurs to Dunsey, a single note in the violas and celli is expanded by consecutive entries by the other strings that diverge stepwise or in patterns of ascending leaps of thirds followed by descending intervals of seconds, to form sound complexes in a single chord in the fifth bar of the pattern (see from the fifth bar of p. 126). A passage ensues in which the motive starting with three semiquavers and a quaver is imitated in the strings (see from the third bar of p. 127), after which the diverging pattern occurs again three times – this time with tremolo bowing and with the repeats of the pattern shorter than its initial statement, all of which heightens the anxious atmosphere.

A calming flute solo curiously interrupts the building tension (see the fourth bar of p. 129), after which the pizzicato broken major triads interpolated by the horn minor triads, now approached from an accented minor triad a semitone above the triad on which it stalls, recur – this time with the snare drum roll adding to the increased suspense leading to the horns' minor triads (see pp. 130-132). Thereafter, a broken major triad figure is for the first time heard in the trombones with the horns and the trumpets playing syncopated chords as Dunsey finds the stone under which Marner's gold is hidden (see from the second bar on p. 133). As the strings and woodwinds are added to the orchestration – the recitative thus reaching its climax – Dunsey finds the gold.

As Dunsey only sings a few lines in this recitative; the treatment thereof is largely orchestral. The orchestral music determines the action and is indeed very vivid; the singer is the mere physical embodiment of the action on stage. This is a suitable treatment of this part of the scene, as the action portrayed is pivotal to the plot and the descriptive, soundtrack-like quality of the music clearly articulates it. Any contemporary audience

member would have grasped its implications immediately. It is thus an effective device to afford this part of the plot the weight or importance it is due.

The interlude between Scenes i and ii in Act III brings together all the signifying themes and motives used in the opera thus far (attached as Appendix V, p. 136). This converging of ideas serves as a precedent to the climax of the plot that ensues shortly after, where Godfrey reveals Eppie's parentage, she is presented with the choice between Marner and Godfrey and Godfrey's redemption is denied in her choice of Marner.

The postlude of the previous scene overlaps with the beginning of the interlude. The ascending and descending scales in the second and first violins respectively, that invokes Godfrey and Nancy's resolve 'let us forget the years of barren waste' is thus freshly in mind when the bass clarinet starts its alternating D and F (see p. 136), recalling the accompaniment of Marner's first aria and signalling the beginning of the interlude and anticipating Marner's presence in the next scene. The bassoon enters with two bars of Marner's aria, which is interrupted by syncopated chords in the horns and lower strings, comprising of the notes of the pentatonic scale on E and serving as accompaniment of the greed-motive heard in the solo first violin's high register, followed contrapuntally by a second entry of the motive in the high register of a solo second violin a minor third lower (see pp. 137-8). The suggestion of the gesture is clear: there are two parties vying for Eppie's love and 'ownership' of her.

The bassoon and bass-clarinet enter again with another part of Marner's theme, once again interrupted by a syncopated chord in the horns and lower strings, this time a dominant seventh chord on B-flat in first inversion, supporting contrapuntal entries of the greed-motive again in the violins (see the last two bars of p. 138 and pp. 139-140). Following this interruption is a sudden instrumental recapitulation of the 'good gold, kind gold'/'she came to me' aria (see pp. 141-147). The listener is hereby reminded of Eppie as the substitution of Marner's gold and his toil to keep her in Act II. A similar toil is by implication foreshadowed in the quotation of the aria in the interlude. The groups of four descending quavers are followed by an E-flat minor scale in thirds in the strings that result in alternating A-flat and F in the oboe. Whereas in the previous arias the groups consisting of four descending quavers would have been followed by a descending scale in quadruplets that disrupted the perception of metre, it is now, after the alternating notes in the oboe, followed by a descending scale of which each degree is incorporated in a broken major triad in quavers in the flute and oboe parts, thus keeping the metre intact. This treatment of the 'Good gold, kind gold'/'she came to me' aria is repeated, with the

descending scale passage at the end extended, orchestrated from the highest to lowest woodwinds ‘relaying’ each other. The timbre thus darkens as the triads descend and come to a halt at the fermata, supported by chords in the horns and trombones.

In the final section of the interlude (see pp. 148-152), ascending broken major chords in the horns hail the return of the greed-motive in the upper strings and harp. These two themes alternate as the harmonies in the lower strings ascend sequentially. The gold-motive in the woodwinds is added at the beginning of scene ii (see p. 150), preparing the audience for the beginning of the next scene where the villagers ask Marner about his gold that was found. The interlude comes to a climactic end with the layering of motives and themes: the horns playing their broken chords that are imitated by the trumpets, the strings repeating the last part of the greed-motive, and the woodwinds repeating the gold-motive unremittingly (see p. 150-152). Yet more layers of sound are produced by the trombones that play slow, ascending broken major triads following each other in intervals of a third, reminiscent of Marner’s first aria. Finally, a triangle is added to the last chord (see the last bar of p. 151) of the interlude that launches the first number, a chorus, of the next scene.

The interlude brings together all the elements of the opera, musically and dramatically speaking, in preparation of the next scene, in which the plot has culminated. While the musical representations of characters, objects and ideas are clearly discernable to the listener, the music’s idiom is that of the twentieth century: its fragmentary character, large contrasts, and its layering of apparently disparate motives and tonalities. The product is convincing, effective music that is also accessible. The listener is faced with the prospect that Joubert’s music works best in this opera when it doesn’t explicitly ‘belong’ to any character. A depersonalized music that is fluent, modern and utterly convincing. This returns us to the question of the extent to which the characters in *Silas Marner* and their fate are autobiographically invested with the displaced author’s voice, thereby raising the stakes in the arias and recitatives and explaining the difference in styles that co-inhabit in *Silas Marner*.

### **Musical ‘sameness’ as symptom of displacement**

Perhaps the most poignant marker of displacement in *Silas Marner* is an absence most easily picked up on through a reading of Eliot’s novel. It is well-known that George Eliot was particularly adept at Midland English dialects, and the use thereof is clear in her *Silas Marner*. Dialect is employed to distinguish the rural inhabitants of Raveloe from

foreigners,<sup>197</sup> to differentiate between classes within Raveloe itself,<sup>198</sup> and hence plays an important role in the vivid characterization in the novel. It is notable that Marner initially speaks without dialect, and that as the book progresses, his language becomes increasingly inflected as a result of his assimilation into the Raveloe society. This is not portrayed in the opera, although modality and folksongs, which could be regarded as musical ‘dialects’, occur. The use of folksongs in the second act is literal, and nothing more than a faithful following of descriptions in the novel. These songs include ‘The flaxen-headed ploughboy’, ‘Over the hills and far away’ and ‘Sir Roger de Coverley’.<sup>199</sup> To an extent these songs succeed in depicting country life and are thus successful as portrayals of musical ‘dialect’. Modality, however, is part of the tonal language throughout the opera, and cannot be described as a similar, intentional and specifically depicting device.

Already in Marner’s first recitative the trend of modal use is set: Marner’s lines are based on phrygian scales with C-sharp and a polytonal orchestral accompaniment, juxtaposing B-flat and A major chords. In the first recitative between Godfrey and Dunstan in Act I Scene ii, a descending dorian scale with C as its finalis interrupts the sung parts of the recitative (especially Dunstan’s), that are otherwise accompanied by broken chords of major triads generally following each other in intervals of thirds between each set. Another example is Marner’s aria in Act III scene ii, ‘Last night they brought the stolen gold again’, in which the mixolydian mode is used. The use of modes is therefore not a portrayal of Raveloe’s natives, a distinction between Raveloe’s classes, or depicting of a specific character.

The musical portrayal of dialect so carefully built into Eliot’s novel is thus neglected by Joubert. It is this author’s contention that the lack of a deliberate tonal diction associated with each character causes the characters to be suspended *between* ‘dialects’, a tonally ambivalent position. In other words, Joubert’s indifference to tonal ‘tags’ or dialects as employed by Eliot in her novel *levels out differences* in characters.

Perhaps the best example of this ‘levelling of difference’ – this time not associated with the presence or absence of musical ‘dialect’ – is found in the fugue ‘For money’s

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<sup>197</sup> Three instances emanate from the novel: In the scene at the Rainbow Inn, the different classes are distinguished by means of dialect (chapter 6); Silas is initially set apart by his use of standard English (see for instance p. 77), and the Miss Gunns, visiting Raveloe for the New Year’s party at the Red House, condescendingly notes the disparities between the lavishly ordained ladies of Raveloe speaking in unsophisticated dialects (see chapter 11, pp. 92-93).

<sup>198</sup> See the difference in the use of dialect between the lightly tainted language of the higher class citizens of Raveloe and the heavy dialect in the peasants’ conversations at the New Year’s festivities. George Eliot, *Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe* (Penguin edition 1996, London and New York) 100-103.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 100-101.



money / and always the same' – a number that displays the most innovative choral writing in the opera (Appendix VI, p. 153). The fugue in four parts incorporates canonic writing between *pairs* of voice groups (bass/alto and tenor/soprano) that, unusually, constitute the subject and answer *as pairs*. The tonal expectation of a tonic to dominant relationship between the subject and answer is adhered to. The first exposition is followed by a two bar episode (see the sixth and seventh bars of p. 154), after which the second exposition starts with an entry of the tenor/soprano pair (see the eighth bar of p. 154). As expected, the order of the voice entries varies in the second exposition, the tenor/soprano pair entering first as the subject (again on the tonic, A flat), followed by the bass and alto. Although the canonic imitation is maintained in the tenor/soprano entries, the bass and alto are clearly gaining independence and imitating 'in their own right' rather than canonically (see the ninth bar of p. 154). However, the tonic-dominant relationship is now also complicated when the bass and alto part ways, the former starting the theme on C and the latter on E flat. Although the dynamic of tonic-dominant is muddled by this turn of events, another kind of tonal coherence starts to develop in its place, namely the harmonic outline of an A flat-C-E flat sonority. The oppositional tonic-dominant construct characterising the fugal exposition (unusually paired in this example) is thus gradually being mediated by the intervention of C into a new consonant understanding of their relationship. A second episode of three bars is followed by a third exposition in which all the voices now enter in a different order and on different notes (see the third last bar of p. 154). The bass enters first on A flat, followed by the soprano on C, the alto and tenor on E flat and B flat respectively. The spell of the canon has been broken and the voices, although still contrapuntally active and recognizably fugal, inhabit a harmonic environment constituted by the outline of a compound tertian chord. This more usual fugal voice independence is maintained in the fourth exposition (see the first four bars of p. 155), where the order of the entries is once again changed, starting with the Alto on A flat, the tenor on E flat, the bass on G flat and finally the soprano on B flat.

As the above leads one to expect, the tonality of the fugue is far from settled. While the key signature indicates that the fugue is in D flat-major, the subject outlines the notes of the dominant seventh of that key. This is not because it is a modulating theme, as the answer confirms. The answer outlines the dominant seventh chord built on E flat, in other words, the dominant of the dominant. Apart from D flat-major, a second possible explanation recalls the use of the mixolydian mode in the previous aria. One could deduce that the fugue starts in the mixolydian mode with A flat as its finalis, and that the D flat-

major key signature merely avoids the cumbersome adding of accidentals. However, regarding the chords outline in the first exposition entries, it is clear that the subject's major-minor chord on the A flat finalis (if taken as a myxolidian environment) is balanced by the answer's major-minor chord on E flat (implying a tonally functional relationship with A flat as a tonic). As from the second exposition, however, the G natural validating a tonic-dominant hearing between the subject and the answer, becomes a G flat. The subject and answer now seem unopposed to each other. In fact, the 'dominant' chord built on the E flat becomes an extension of the 'tonic' chord, forming a single sonority in the form of a thirteenth chord built on the A flat finalis. This is especially notable in the third and fourth expositions, where each voice starts on its own note, thus expanding the harmony created by the counterpoint, to outline this sonority.

In the treatment of the fugue, a measure of difference opposed to sameness can be deduced. The bass/alto and soprano/tenor pairings suggest a 'sameness' in themselves, even as the relationship between the two pairs constituting the subject and answer suggests a *difference* between tonally recognizable (oppositional) 'others'. The forces of 'sameness' and 'otherness' are finely balanced. This balance is disrupted in the second exposition, when the subject is first stated by the tenor/soprano pair, but opposed to the bass and alto, now longer paired but divided by a minor third. As each voice enters with its own starting note in the third and fourth exposition, all restricting canonical 'sameness', caused by the pairing of the voices, dissolve. What remains is the 'otherness' characterized by fugal interplay of differentiated voices. But this 'otherness' is also newly clothed in a harmonic coherence that could be heard to enable a new kind of 'sameness'.

Perhaps it is taking connections between work and life too far to connect this treatment with Joubert's stake in the idea of a constructive, multifaceted whole of 'otherness'. Combined with the perspectives offered above, however, it seems plausible to speculate on connections between his personal (autobiographical) interest in the outcast-character and his musical solutions to forge 'otherness' into a unified whole allowing ambiguity and plurality a safe haven of acceptance. Otherness here can denote Joubert's use and endorsement of tonality during a time where serialism and the avant-garde posed serious challenges to the notion of the 'tonal' – associated with nostalgia, optimism, historical contingencies, and ineptitude to express the 'modern', post-war realities and disillusion that characterised twentieth century art to a great extent. A comment by John Cage, a leading proponent of the avant-garde that Joubert so heavily criticised, ironically summarises the performative social function that Joubert intends with his music: '...by

making musical situations which are analogies to desirable social circumstances which we do not yet have, we make music suggestive and relevant to the serious questions that face Mankind'.<sup>200</sup> It is in this respect that Joubert as a composer is no different from the 'otherness' the avant-garde poses to him. The outcomes that composers concerned with the social relevance of their art, avant-garde or tonal, imagine for their music could bear more semblance of sameness than hitherto suspected.

### **Constructing displacement as aesthetic frame for *Silas Marner***

This chapter set out to explore displacement as a theoretical paradigm for John Joubert's opera *Silas Marner* not only in the circumstantial aspects of the opera, like its conception and reception history, but also in exploring displacement as a sound that constitutes the disjunctures in the opera's composition. I have argued that a reading of *Silas Marner* is very limited within synchronic and diachronic perspectives of twentieth century opera, tonality and narrative. These perspectives do not enable a reading of the work as a product of two disparate continents in dialogue through the composer's nostalgia for his country of birth and appropriation of his adopted country, and two different aesthetics that consequently inform the work's composition. By examining *Silas Marner* in a paradigm that focuses on these very aspects that defy typical categorizations like nationality, compositional school, the trajectory of compositional development in a geographical area and a stable identity enabled through all stable notions of place, the work comes to bear significance as a product of plurality.

The opera is firmly lodged in both British and South African nationalities (although its theme applies to any form of 'outsider-ness'), as the novel itself and its setting is typically English, but addresses the theme of the outsider, which pertains more to the South African artist's condition as practitioner of a 'peripheral' art vis-à-vis the European cultural centre. It is therefore to be expected that the work itself is as comfortable in a South African performance environment as it is in a British one, as can be surmised from the fact that Joubert so easily set his hopes on a première for the work in London despite his intense disappointment about the failed Bloemfontein commission. Indeed the opera was well received in both countries despite a measure of inevitable criticism. But the diverging opinions of the opera, especially with regard to main focus

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<sup>200</sup> Cage quoted in Arnold Whittall, 'Engagement or Alienation', *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music: Tradition and Innovation*, (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, 2003), 108.

points of the reviews, emphasizes the association with place as an essential paradigm in its reception. The context and reception of *Silas Marner* in South Africa and in England therefore enforces the importance of place which is entwined with identity, not only in the composition but also in the understanding of the opera.

The opera's conception history demonstrates the importance that Joubert attached to the idea of a return to South Africa after thirteen years in England. The opera not only enabled this return physically, but also in a musical expression of a return by composing an opera *for* South Africa (and an important South African commemoration that celebrates South African identity at that) utilising the expertise he had gained in British soil. The aesthetic that the opera adopts, however, becomes conflated. While it hinges much on the British and twentieth century aesthetic as exemplified by Britten, and to a lesser extent Stravinsky, moments of nostalgia lapses the opera's aesthetic back to the nineteenth century. As has been argued, the disruptions of dramatic credibility in Joubert's generally twentieth-century aesthetic by the moments of sentimentality engendered by a nineteenth century aesthetic, stretches the credulity of the listener and thereby the dramatic effectiveness of the opera. These very elements could be posited as the 'displaced' elements in the opera: a musical language out of place in the twentieth century, a lingering romanticism marking the distance between the centre and periphery, or the inspired tale of hope in the positive conclusion of acceptance for the displaced, outsider figure.

The plot itself thematizes the notion of displacement not only in the physical relocation of its protagonist, Silas Marner, but also in a series of figurative displacements that pertain more to digression of class, crossing the boundaries of traditions and conventions which relate specifically to the character Godfrey, his marriage to Molly and the child born from the marriage crossing the class-border. But the displacements also pertain to symbolic fracture with community on the part of Marner, and the reinstatement of a sense of belonging to the community brought about by Marner's adoption of Eppie. The sense of place and belonging to a community is symbolised by a series of displacements that could be described as to an extent circular: a sense of belonging in a community is replaced with gold, which is replaced by Eppie and finally by a regaining of a sense of community and the returned gold.

In the discussion of the opera, various musical windows have been opened on the theme of displacement. The way in which religion is de-emphasized in a narrative of redemption not only suggests a departure from the topos so frequently linked to Wagner but also, perhaps unwittingly, the cultural connotations of nationalism, exclusivity that

burdens the Wagner discourse in the twentieth century. Joubert is, however, unambiguous in his alignment of the opera's theme with those of *Wozzeck* and *Grimes*, and intends *Silas Marner* as a corrective for the doomed fate of the outsider characters portrayed in them. But it attempts to do so in an operatic idiom that is arguably not the most effective, dramatic artistic vessel for addressing a thoroughly twentieth century operatic topos. The more dated and fractured 'number' opera that Joubert uses as the macro-structure is, however, not the only aspect of the opera that employs a rather dated practice. It is also in the lapses to a nineteenth century tonal idiom in the portrayal of topics that are problematic in twentieth century opera. The problem in depicting love and endings in a rather naïve nostalgic way – at odds with the opera's generally twentieth century idiom – is also the aesthetic that seems out of place, not only within twentieth century opera in general, but also within the context of *Silas Marner* specifically. These optimistic scenes are composed vocally, and perhaps provide a possible explanation for the effectiveness of the instrumental music as opposed to the sometimes doubtful effect of the vocal music. The question of musical aesthetic, that of the nineteenth century associated with the naïve, improbable and less effective moments of the opera as opposed to that of the twentieth century that convinces of the instrumental music's effectiveness, inaugurates the notion of sameness and difference.

This brings us to the final crucial omission that Joubert made in the opera: the negation of dialect and thereby, as has been argued, the prioritization of sameness over difference. Paradoxically, the notion of sameness and difference manifests in *Silas Marner* in a way that was unforeseen: the very aspects that he sought to portray the redemption of his protagonist and the impossible notions of acceptance, love, reconciliation and positive conclusion are those elements that strike the listener as 'different' in the opera. The success of *Silas Marner*, it emerges, is qualified by the very elements linking it with displacement. This opens the door to speculations on biographical relevance in this opera. Once this happens, *Silas Marner* becomes an exemplary working-out of the problem of displacement.

The aspects discussed in this chapter and the thesis combine as a critical construct that argues for displacement to be used as a theoretical frame in understanding *Silas Marner* as an opera. Doing this enables not only an exploration of the opera on the basis of finding and appreciating its unique voice, but also an exploration of displacement as an important dynamic in twentieth-century artistic creation.

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<sup>201</sup> Both recordings were kindly made available by John Joubert. The SABC recording is performed with cuts.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix I:** Excerpt from Godfrey and Dunsey's duet, 'Nancy, I loved you when we met', Act I scene ii (from the second bar of this page).

42 110

Fl.  
Ob.  
Cl. (i. A)  
Fg.  
H.  
G.  
D.

free of her  
Nancy, I loved you when we

pizz

Handwritten musical score for page 111. The score includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. Bb.), Clarinet in E-flat (Cl. Eb.), Bassoon (Fg.), Horns (H.), Violin (V.), Viola (Vla.), Cello (Cello solo), and Double Bass (Tutti). The Cello part features a solo section with the instruction *mf up.* and lyrics: "no way to undo what was done". The Clarinet in E-flat part has the instruction *simile*. The Double Bass part has the instruction *met.* The score is written in a common time signature and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Handwritten musical score for guitar and piano. The score is written on multiple staves. The guitar part (G.) and piano part (P.) are the primary focus. The piano part includes a section with lyrics: "no way to cancel out the debt". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *pp* and *sf*. The piano part also features a section with a large slur and a fermata.

43

Handwritten musical score for piano accompaniment, first system. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music consists of dense chords and arpeggiated patterns. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *crac.* (crescendo). A fermata is present over the final measure.

Handwritten musical score for piano accompaniment, second system. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music consists of dense chords and arpeggiated patterns. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *crac.* (crescendo).

Handwritten musical score for vocal line, third system. It features a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are: "am my wife - or lose her or for - get". Dynamic markings include *mf* and *crac.* (crescendo).

Handwritten musical score for piano accompaniment, fourth system. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music consists of dense chords and arpeggiated patterns. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *crac.* (crescendo). A *div. in 3* (divided in 3) marking is present above the staff.

Handwritten musical score for a piece. The score is written on multiple staves, including vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Nancy Nancy Nancy, my new love Molly - sweet Molly! sweet". Performance markings include *mf*, *Sul G*, *espresso*, and *molto cantabile*. The score is handwritten and appears to be a draft or working manuscript.



Handwritten musical score for the first system. It features a vocal line with a first ending marked "1." and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a section with a wavy line and a section with a circled "3." and "mf" markings.

Waway my new love  
 who my true love  
 how you loves her then

Handwritten musical score for the second system, featuring lyrics and musical notation. The lyrics are: "Waway my new love", "who my true love", and "how you loves her then".

Handwritten musical score for the third system, primarily consisting of piano accompaniment with various musical notations and dynamics.

Five empty musical staves at the bottom of the page, intended for further notation.

This page contains a handwritten musical score for piano and strings. The score is organized into two systems. The first system includes a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and three individual staves for strings, labeled 'Pimp', 'G', and 'D'. The piano part features complex chordal textures with some accidentals, such as a flat sign (b) above a note. The string parts consist of sustained notes and tremolos. The second system continues the piano part with more intricate chordal patterns and includes dynamic markings like 'f' and 'p'. The bottom half of the page shows several empty staves.

**Appendix II:** Excerpt from Godfrey and Nancy's duet, 'Trust me Nancy', Act II scene i (from figure 24).

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a duet. The score is organized into systems. The first system includes vocal staves for Godfrey (G.) and Nancy (N.), and piano accompaniment for Harp and Piano. The second system features a Harp part and a vocal line for Godfrey. The third system shows the vocal line for Nancy. The fourth system contains the piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *p*, *pp*, *mf*, and *div.*. There are two circled numbers, '24', in the upper part of the score. The page number '76' is written in the top right corner.

This page contains a handwritten musical score for piano and voice. It consists of several systems of staves. The top system shows piano accompaniment with chords and some melodic lines. The second system features a more active piano melody. The third system continues the piano accompaniment. The fourth system includes a vocal line with lyrics: "tell you all my heart ? I must can". The fifth system shows a complex piano accompaniment with many notes and chords. The bottom half of the page contains several empty staves.

Handwritten musical score for the first system, featuring five staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom three are in bass clef. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

H.

Handwritten musical score for the Harp part, showing a single staff with a complex melodic line.

Harp.

Handwritten musical score for the Harp part, showing a single staff with a complex melodic line.

N.  
G.

trust me, God then  
how can I tell you all  
- caal

Handwritten musical score for the vocal parts (N. and G.), showing two staves with lyrics and musical notation.

div.

Handwritten musical score for the piano accompaniment, showing multiple staves with complex rhythmic patterns.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system, including a grand staff with treble and bass clefs and a piano accompaniment staff with a brace.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system, featuring a single melodic line with various note values and rests.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system, showing a piano accompaniment with chords and arpeggiated figures.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system, including a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment.

feel ? or under-stand the part von .  
I can . not tell you all my heart .

Handwritten musical notation for the fifth system, featuring a piano accompaniment with a "mf" dynamic marking.

Handwritten musical notation for the sixth system, showing a piano accompaniment with a brace.

Handwritten musical score for a string quartet. The score is arranged in two systems of five staves each. The instruments are labeled on the left: Fl. (Flute), Ob. (Oboe), Cl. (Clarinet), F. (Fagott/Bassoon), T. (Tromba/Trumpet), and G. (Tromba/Trumpet). The first system includes a circled measure number '25' above the top staff. The second system includes a circled measure number '25' above the T. staff. The G. staff in the second system contains the lyrics: "Trust me, Namey - Trust me... and et etc". The bottom two staves of the second system contain piano accompaniment with markings such as *pp*, *com. all'e*, *arco unis.*, *pizz. div.*, and *arco unis.*. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature.

**Appendix III:** Excerpt from Godfrey and Nancy's duet, 'What words could I use', Act III  
Scene i (from Allegro Agitato in the second bar of this page).

49

**ALLEGRO AGITATO**

N.  
G.

**ALLEGRO AGITATO**

Can cord.  
Can cord.  
Can cord.

pizz p



Fl.  
Cl. 1.  
Cl. 2.

Harp

N  
G

what words could I use ——— what things could I say — what pleadings, e

Handwritten musical score for a piano and voice piece. The score is written on a grand staff with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part features complex textures with many sixteenth notes and slurs. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "cuses", "x. cuses", and "x. cuses". There are various musical markings such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings throughout the piece.

Handwritten musical score for a piece on page 52. The score includes vocal lines, piano accompaniment, and a grand piano section. The lyrics "an - ly - tics to beg you to" are written under the vocal line.

This page contains a handwritten musical score for piano and voice. The score is organized into several systems of staves. The top system consists of a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with a dense texture of chords and arpeggios. The third system features a vocal line with the handwritten instruction "with" above the first staff and "stay" below the second staff. The fourth system continues the piano accompaniment. Below the fourth system, there are several empty staves, indicating the end of the written music on this page.

Fl. 2.

Fl. 2. musical notation with notes and rests.

Harp

Harp musical notation with arpeggiated chords and melodic fragments.

N.  
G.

And when you hoped for gain so much was lost

Vocal notation with lyrics: "And when you hoped for gain so much was lost".

Piano accompaniment for the vocal section, including chords and arpeggios.

Fl. I.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Flute I. It consists of several systems of staves. The top system includes a vocal line with lyrics: "What words could I use" and "Such great wisdom". The piano accompaniment is written on grand staff notation (treble and bass clefs). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings. The handwriting is in black ink on white paper.

Appendix IV: Dunsey's recitatif, 'All dark in here', Act I scene iii.

(56)

157

*Poco Lento*

H.

(Can. song)

*fp*

*f*

Pft.

*pp*

*f*

He looks round innocent smiling

D.

All dark in here

(Can. song)

(Can. song)

(Can. song)

(Can. song)

*arco*

*pizz* *pp*

*f*

H.

Pkt.

Handwritten musical score for Horn (H.) and Piano (Pkt.). The Horn part is mostly rests. The Piano part features a complex melodic line with triplets and slurs, and a bass line with chords and triplets. Dynamics include *f* and *sf*.

Handwritten musical score for Piano (Pkt.). The score shows two systems of piano accompaniment with dynamic markings like *p*, *am*, and *f*.



Handwritten musical score for Flute (Fl.), Horns (H.), Percussion (Pkt.), and Drums (D.). The score is written on multiple staves. The Flute part features a melodic line with notes such as G4, A4, B4, and C5, with dynamics like *fz* and *mf*. The Horns part includes notes like B3 and C4, with dynamics like *fz* and *mf*. The Percussion part shows rhythmic patterns with notes like G4, A4, B4, and C5, and dynamics like *pp*. The Drums part includes notes like G4, A4, B4, and C5, with dynamics like *fz* and *mf*. The score is marked with various dynamics and articulation marks.

FE. *f*

H. *ffp* (Sord.)

PF. *ff*

J. *mp*

Empty as a bird's nest . . . neat + warm like that too

*pizz*

*f*

*pp*

Handwritten musical score for the first system. It features a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line begins with a dynamic marking of *f*. The piano accompaniment includes a section marked *ffp* with the instruction *(end.)* written above and below the staff.

Handwritten musical score for the second system, primarily a vocal line. The lyrics are: "And the damned horse dead! Fell at the fence". The dynamic marking *mf* is placed above the final notes of the phrase.

Handwritten musical score for the third system, featuring piano accompaniment on a grand staff. The dynamic marking *pp* is visible in the lower right portion of the system.

A series of ten empty musical staves, arranged vertically, occupying the lower half of the page.

H. *a2. Can cond.* *mp*

D. *riding him too hard - no money for Godfrey - + no horse either*

H. *cresc.*

D. *pu f* *Al - but Duncan's got the brain - Du -*

*p cresc.* *f*

Handwritten musical score for Horns (H.), Trombone (T.), and Piano (P.).

**Horn (H.)**: *pp* *f*

**Trombone (T.)**: *pp* *f*

**Piano (P.)**: *mf* *f*

Lyrics: - say thought of the old man's gold ... but where the devil is he ?

Dynamic markings for Piano: *mp cresc*, *p cresc*

Handwritten musical score for Trombone (T.) and Piano (P.).

**Trombone (T.)**: *p*

**Piano (P.)**: *mf* *f*

Lyrics: At home - let's have some

58 [He lights a candle] mf

1. *can send* *cresc*

2. *can send* *mf* *cresc*

3. *light then*

*mp cresc*

*p cresc*

*mf cresc*

Tr. 1. *mf*

2. *f* *mf*

3. *Who's that gold they say he keeps in hiding? all fairy-tales perhaps..*

*f* *mf*

Fl. 1 Solo *mf* *pass f*

Tr. 2 *mf* (Fl.) *f*

D. *but where would he keep it?*

*pizz* *mf* *arco* *mf* *f*

*(ad lib. quasi cadenza.)*

Fl. *(stacc.)* *12* *(stacc.)*

(59)

*Poco Lento* [He starts searching the room]

*Poco accel*

H.

T<sub>2</sub>.

Perc.

Pft.

*con sord. az.*

S.D. ta *mf* *ff*

*cresc.* *mp* *ff*

*Poco accel*

*Senza sord*

*Senza sord.* *mp* *ff*

*Senza sord pian.* *mp* *ff*

*pizz.* *Senza sord.* *cresc.* *f*

*pizz.* *mp* *ff*



Handwritten musical score for a symphony orchestra. The score is written on multiple staves, including woodwinds (Horn, Trombone, Percussion), strings (Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabasso), and piano. The tempo markings are *A Tempo* and *Poco accel*. The score includes dynamic markings such as *con f*, *ff*, *cresc*, *pp*, *mp*, and *f*. The page number 167 is visible in the top right corner.

*Allegro*

14

Handwritten musical score for four instruments: Horns (H.), Trumpets (Tr.), Percussion (Perc.), and Piano/Forte (Pft.). The score is written in 6/8 time and includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation, and performance instructions.

- H. (Horn):** Features a melodic line starting with a *mf* dynamic, followed by a *fp* dynamic. Includes a *(sord)* marking.
- Tr. (Trumpet):** Features a melodic line starting with a *mf* dynamic, followed by a *fp* dynamic.
- Perc. (Percussion):** Features a rhythmic pattern labeled *S.D. E.*
- Pft. (Piano/Forte):** Features a complex accompaniment with various dynamics including *mp*, *mf*, *ff*, *pp*, and *mf cresc.*. Includes a *cresc.* marking.

Finishing the loose stone on the hearth

Handwritten musical score for orchestra and piano. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fg.), Horns (Hr.), Trumpets (Tr.), Trombones (Tromb.), Timpani (Timp.), Percussion (Perc.), Piano (Pft.), and Double Bass (D.).

Key annotations and markings include:

- Flute (Fl.):** *mf cresc*, *mf cresc*, *mf cresc*
- Horns (Hr.):** *mf cresc*, *mf cresc*, *mf cresc*
- Trumpets (Tr.):** *mf cresc*, *mf cresc*, *mf cresc*
- Trombones (Tromb.):** *mf cresc*, *mf cresc*, *mf cresc*
- Percussion (Perc.):** *S.D.*, *mf*, *Gymb.*
- Piano (Pft.):** *f*, *f*, *f*, *f*
- Double Bass (D.):** *f*, *f*
- Violins (Vln.):** *mf*, *mf*, *mf*
- Violas (Vla.):** *mf*, *mf*, *mf*
- Conducting marks:** *arco*, *arco*

The score is written in a major key with a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The piece concludes with a final cadence in the piano part.

he removes it + sees the gold ]

Musical score for strings and percussion. The score includes staves for Violins (H.), Violas (Va.), Trombones (Tromb.), Timpani (Timp.), and Percussion (Perc.). The notation features complex rhythmic patterns with many accents and slurs. A dynamic marking of *f* is present in the Percussion staff.

Musical staff for Double Bass (D.). The notation shows a melodic line with some rests and dynamic markings.

True then - by God - real gold - !

Musical score for piano. The score includes staves for the right and left hands. The notation features complex rhythmic patterns with many accents and slurs.

(60)

171

*Allegro vivace*

Handwritten musical score for a piano piece. It consists of five staves. The first staff has a tempo marking *Allegro vivace* and a performance instruction *(1. 2. change to Picc.)*. The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex melodic line in the right hand with many slurs and ornaments, and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The score includes a repeat sign and a double bar line.

*Allegro vivace*

Handwritten musical score for a piano piece with lyrics. It consists of five staves. The first staff contains the lyrics: "Not at home, Master Manner? Then I'll take a loan of you". The tempo marking *Allegro vivace* is written above the staff. The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex melodic line in the right hand with many slurs and ornaments, and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The score includes a repeat sign and a double bar line.

Appendix V: Orchestral interlude, Act III scenes i to ii (from figure 22).

99

Handwritten musical score for the first system. It includes staves for I, II, Vln, Cello, and C-B. The Vln part has a marking "Solo (con fma)" and a dynamic marking "p".

Handwritten musical score for the second system. It includes staves for an. cl., Fg., and C-B. A circled number "22" is written above the an. cl. staff. There are dynamic markings "pp" and "p".

Handwritten musical score for the third system. It includes staves for Timp., Vln, Cello, and C-B. The Cello part has a marking "(3 soli)". The C-B part has a marking "Solo (con fma)". There are dynamic markings "ppp" and "pp".

\* N.B. Here and elsewhere I have for convenience written the Bass-clarinet part in the bass clef. This does not affect the transposition - the notes should still sound a 9th lower than written.

Fl. 1- Solo

Cl.

Fg.

1,2  
3,4

Imp

I Solo (con fad)  
Tutti

II Solo (con fad)  
Tutti

Vle Tutti (con fad) div.

Cll Tutti (con fad) div.

C.B.

ppp

ave...

pp

f

pp

pp

This page of a handwritten musical score, numbered 81, contains a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is written on ten systems of five-line staves. The first system shows a vocal line with a melodic phrase and a piano accompaniment consisting of a wavy line in the right hand and a few notes in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal line with a more complex melodic line and a piano accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands. The third system shows the vocal line with a similar melodic pattern and a piano accompaniment with sustained chords. The fourth system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The fifth system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The sixth system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The seventh system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The eighth system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The ninth system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tenth system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is written in black ink on white paper.



Handwritten musical score for orchestra and choir. The score is written on multiple staves. The top staff is labeled 'u. o.' and contains a melodic line. The second staff is labeled 'Fg.' and contains a bass line. Below these are two staves for strings, labeled '1, 2' and '3, 4'. The next two staves are for woodwinds, labeled 'I.' and 'II.'. The bottom two staves are for voices, labeled 'a' and 'li'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A bracket labeled 'con sord' is placed over the string staves, and a 'pp' marking is visible in the woodwind section. The bottom of the page shows several empty staves.

[change to C. 2.]

The image shows a handwritten musical score on page 83. At the top right, there is a handwritten instruction: "[change to C. 2.]". The score consists of several systems of staves. The first system has a single staff with a few notes. The second system has two staves, with the lower one featuring a wavy line. The third system has two staves with dense sixteenth-note passages, marked with "p" and "Sve". The fourth system has two staves with similar dense passages. The fifth system has two staves with block chords. Below these are several empty staves.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

F.

H.

Tr.

2 Tromb.

3 + Tuba

Timp.

**VIVACE**

Tutti (senza fine)

Tutti (senza fine)

(senza fine)

(senza fine)

Tutti (senza fine)

mf

f

p

sf

senza fine

Handwritten musical score for a string quartet, page 85. The score consists of four staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. It contains a melodic line with various ornaments and dynamics. The second and third staves are grand staves with treble and bass clefs, containing accompaniment. The bottom staff is a single bass clef staff with accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'sf', 'f', and 'pizz', and a tempo marking 'a2'.

Handwritten musical score for a string quartet and piano. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Violin I (V. I.), Violin II (V. II.), Viola (V.), Cello (C.), and Double Bass (Cb.). The second system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Piano (P.). The piano part is written in grand staff notation. The score contains various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *poco f*, *f*, *p*, and *cruc*. There are also some handwritten annotations and markings throughout the score.

Handwritten musical score for piano, page 87. The score consists of multiple systems of staves. The first system shows a piano introduction with a forte (f) dynamic. The second system features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The third system continues the melodic and bass lines. The fourth system includes a 'pizz' (pizzicato) marking and a change in dynamics. The fifth system shows further melodic and bass development. The sixth system continues the piece. The seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The eighth system continues the piece. The ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The tenth system continues the piece. The eleventh system shows a change in dynamics. The twelfth system continues the piece. The thirteenth system shows a change in dynamics. The fourteenth system continues the piece. The fifteenth system shows a change in dynamics. The sixteenth system continues the piece. The seventeenth system shows a change in dynamics. The eighteenth system continues the piece. The nineteenth system shows a change in dynamics. The twentieth system continues the piece. The twenty-first system shows a change in dynamics. The twenty-second system continues the piece. The twenty-third system shows a change in dynamics. The twenty-fourth system continues the piece. The twenty-fifth system shows a change in dynamics. The twenty-sixth system continues the piece. The twenty-seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The twenty-eighth system continues the piece. The twenty-ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The thirtieth system continues the piece. The thirty-first system shows a change in dynamics. The thirty-second system continues the piece. The thirty-third system shows a change in dynamics. The thirty-fourth system continues the piece. The thirty-fifth system shows a change in dynamics. The thirty-sixth system continues the piece. The thirty-seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The thirty-eighth system continues the piece. The thirty-ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The fortieth system continues the piece. The forty-first system shows a change in dynamics. The forty-second system continues the piece. The forty-third system shows a change in dynamics. The forty-fourth system continues the piece. The forty-fifth system shows a change in dynamics. The forty-sixth system continues the piece. The forty-seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The forty-eighth system continues the piece. The forty-ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The fiftieth system continues the piece. The fifty-first system shows a change in dynamics. The fifty-second system continues the piece. The fifty-third system shows a change in dynamics. The fifty-fourth system continues the piece. The fifty-fifth system shows a change in dynamics. The fifty-sixth system continues the piece. The fifty-seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The fifty-eighth system continues the piece. The fifty-ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The sixtieth system continues the piece. The sixty-first system shows a change in dynamics. The sixty-second system continues the piece. The sixty-third system shows a change in dynamics. The sixty-fourth system continues the piece. The sixty-fifth system shows a change in dynamics. The sixty-sixth system continues the piece. The sixty-seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The sixty-eighth system continues the piece. The sixty-ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The seventieth system continues the piece. The seventy-first system shows a change in dynamics. The seventy-second system continues the piece. The seventy-third system shows a change in dynamics. The seventy-fourth system continues the piece. The seventy-fifth system shows a change in dynamics. The seventy-sixth system continues the piece. The seventy-seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The seventy-eighth system continues the piece. The seventy-ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The eightieth system continues the piece. The eighty-first system shows a change in dynamics. The eighty-second system continues the piece. The eighty-third system shows a change in dynamics. The eighty-fourth system continues the piece. The eighty-fifth system shows a change in dynamics. The eighty-sixth system continues the piece. The eighty-seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The eighty-eighth system continues the piece. The eighty-ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The ninetieth system continues the piece. The ninety-first system shows a change in dynamics. The ninety-second system continues the piece. The ninety-third system shows a change in dynamics. The ninety-fourth system continues the piece. The ninety-fifth system shows a change in dynamics. The ninety-sixth system continues the piece. The ninety-seventh system shows a change in dynamics. The ninety-eighth system continues the piece. The ninety-ninth system shows a change in dynamics. The hundredth system continues the piece.

Handwritten musical score for page 88. The score includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (F.), Horns (H.), Trumpets (Tromb.), and Timpani (Timp.). The Flute part begins with a circled 'T' above the staff. The Oboe and Clarinet parts feature intricate melodic lines with many slurs and ties. The Bassoon part has a similar melodic line. The Horns and Trumpets parts are mostly rests, with some notes in the Horns part. The Timpani part is mostly rests. The bottom section of the page shows a grand staff with piano accompaniment, including a right-hand part and a left-hand part with a bass clef. The piano part has a complex rhythmic pattern with many slurs and ties.

Handwritten musical score for a string quartet, page 89. The score is written on ten staves. The top staff contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second and third staves are for the first and second violins, with dynamic markings like "ffz." and "pizz.". The fourth and fifth staves are for the first and second violas, with dynamic markings like "pizz." and "f". The bottom four staves are for the first and second cellos and first and second double basses, with dynamic markings like "pizz." and "f". The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.



Handwritten musical score for page 90, featuring staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fg.), Horns (H.), Trumpets (Tr.), Trombones (Tromb.), Timpani (Timp.), Harp, and Piano. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, dynamics (e.g., *f*, *ff*, *arco*, *f marcato*), and performance instructions like *esce* and *esce*.

40 MODERATO [Flute 2 change to Picc.]

Handwritten musical score for the first system, measures 1-4. The score includes staves for Flute 2 (Piccolo), Clarinet, Bassoon, and Trombone. The Flute 2 part features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Clarinet and Bassoon parts have rests. The Trombone part has a sustained note with a dynamic marking of *p*.

Handwritten musical score for the second system, measures 5-8. The Flute 2 part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Clarinet part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Bassoon part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Trombone part has a sustained note with a dynamic marking of *p*.

Handwritten musical score for the third system, measures 9-12. The Flute 2 part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Clarinet part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Bassoon part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Trombone part has a sustained note with a dynamic marking of *p*.

Handwritten musical score for the fourth system, measures 13-16. The Flute 2 part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Clarinet part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Bassoon part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *rit.* marking. The Trombone part has a sustained note with a dynamic marking of *p*.

MODERATO

Handwritten musical score for the fifth system, measures 17-20. The Flute 2 part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *rit.* marking. The Clarinet part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *rit.* marking. The Bassoon part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *rit.* marking. The Trombone part has a sustained note with a dynamic marking of *mp*.

Handwritten musical score for the sixth system, measures 21-24. The Flute 2 part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *rit.* marking. The Clarinet part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *rit.* marking. The Bassoon part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *rit.* marking. The Trombone part has a sustained note with a dynamic marking of *mp*.

Handwritten musical score for orchestra, page 92. The score includes staves for Flute (Fl), Oboe (Ob), Clarinet (Cl), Bassoon (Fg), Horns (Hr), Trumpets (Timp), Percussion (Perc), and Cymbals (Cym). The music features various dynamics such as 'cresc.', 'mp', and 'cresc.'.

Fl

Ob

Cl *cresc. . . . .*

Fg

*cresc.*

Hr *mp cresc.*

*cresc.*

Timp.

*cresc.*

Timp.

Perc.

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

**SCENE II** The curtain rises. The scene represents the interior

The musical score is written in a single system with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left are Fl. 1, Picc., Ob., Cl., Fg., H., Trp., Tsc., and Piano. The piano part is written in grand staff notation. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (f, mf, cresc.), articulation (acc.), and phrasing slurs. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' (Allegro) in the piano part. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

ACCELL.... ..Tenero coraggio. so v'ovran sunstine and the villagers are

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a symphony. The score is written on multiple staves, each labeled with an instrument. The instruments listed on the left are: Fl. (Flute), Picc. (Piccolo), Ob. (Oboe), Cl. (Clarinet), Fg. (Bassoon), H. (Horn), Tr. (Trumpet), Tamb. (Trombone), Perc. (Percussion), Harp, Vn. A (Violin A), Vn. B (Violin B), and Cb. (Cello). The score is marked with 'ACCELL....' at the top and 'cresc.' (crescendo) throughout. The music is written in a common time signature and features various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system ending at the bottom of the page. The second system begins with the word 'ACCELL....' and continues with the same instruments. The music is written in a clear, legible hand, and the overall appearance is that of a professional manuscript.

Gathering in great excitement in front of it (27) ALLEGRO VIVACE.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for piano and voice. It consists of several systems of staves. The top system includes piano accompaniment with chords and a vocal line. The middle system features a piano accompaniment with a wavy line and a vocal line with lyrics: "They say the forest the weaver's gift". The bottom system is a piano accompaniment with a wavy line and a vocal line with lyrics: "They say the forest the weaver's gift". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *ff* and *f*. The tempo is marked **ALLEGRO VIVACE**.

Appendix VI: Four part fugue, 'For money's money', Act III scene ii (from figure 34).

118

Handwritten musical score for a four-part fugue. The score includes vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "A lie? what does he say? what does he say? what does he mean? Does he mean to... Does he mean to...". The score features dynamic markings such as "p", "cresc.", and "f", and performance instructions like "sempre stacc.". A circled number "34" is written in the center of the page.

*p sempre stacc.*

S: For money's money - and always the same. He must be glad to have it a gain - to have it again.

A: He must be glad to have it a gain - to have it again.

T: For money's money - and always the same.

B: He must be glad to have it a gain - to have it again.

*Cresc.*

S: same He must be glad to have it a gain - to have it a gain - to have it a gain - For money's

A: to have it a gain - to have it a gain - to have it a gain -

T: He must be glad to have it a gain - to have it a gain - to have it a gain - for money's money

B: to have it a gain - to have it a gain - to have it a gain -

*Cresc. ....*

S: money - and always the same. He must be glad to have it a gain - to have it a gain

A: For money's money - and always the same. He must be glad to have it a gain

T: And always the same He must be glad to have it a gain - to have it a gain - to have it a

B: For money's money - and always the same. He must be glad to have it a gain - to have it a

*meno f*

S: to have it a gain - For money's money - and always the same. For money's

A: to have it a gain - to have it a gain - For money's money - and always the same

T: gain - to have it a gain - For money's money - and always the same

B: gain - to have it a gain - For money's money - and always the same. For money's money -



Handwritten musical score for vocal parts. The lyrics are: "money and always the same. For money's money and always the same." The score includes vocal lines with lyrics and musical notation. A circled 'P' is present at the end of the first line.

35

Handwritten musical score for instrumental and vocal parts. The parts are labeled on the left: Fg., H., Timp., Silas., S., A., T., B., and a group of strings. The lyrics are: "and always the same. For money's money and always the same." The score includes musical notation for each part, with dynamics like *pp* and *div.* indicated. A circled 'P' is present at the beginning of the Bass line.