ANALYSIS OF THE SONG CYCLE "ON WENLOCK EDGE"

BY RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

THESIS

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By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES.</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHIES OF RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS AND ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ON WENLOCK EDGE - POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. FROM FAR, FROM EVE AND MORNING - POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. IS MY TEAM PLOUGHING - POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. OH, WHEN I WAS IN LOVE WITH YOU - POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. BREDON HILL - POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. CLUN - POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS.</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY.</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Sectional Divisions of the Song, Bredon Hill</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Division of Section C According to Accompanimental Texture</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Formal Outline of the Song, Clun</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cyclical element A.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Cyclical element B.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Cyclical element C.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Cyclical element D.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Cyclical element E.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Cyclical element F.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Cyclical element F.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Cyclical element H.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Cyclical element J.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>&quot;On Wenlock Edge,&quot; m. 12.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>&quot;On Wenlock Edge,&quot; m. 11-12, cello and piano</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. h.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Cyclical element K.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Cyclical element L.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>&quot;On Wenlock Edge,&quot; m. 34-35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>&quot;On Wenlock Edge,&quot; m. 38.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>&quot;On Wenlock Edge,&quot; m. 62-64</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>&quot;From far, from eve and morning,&quot; m. 3-11</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>&quot;From far, from eve and morning,&quot; m. 12-21.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>&quot;From far, from eve and morning,&quot; m. 22-24.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>&quot;Is my team ploughing,&quot; m. 1-4 and m. 5-7</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>&quot;Is my team ploughing,&quot; m. 52-55.</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>&quot;On Wenlock Edge,&quot; m. 6-10; &quot;Is my team ploughing,&quot; m. 11-14. 63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>&quot;On Wenlock Edge,&quot; m. 28-31; &quot;Is my team ploughing,&quot; m. 15-17. 63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>&quot;Is my team ploughing,&quot; m. 9-18. 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>&quot;Is my team ploughing,&quot; m. 9-10. 66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>&quot;Oh, when I was in love with you,&quot; m. 1-4. 73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>&quot;Oh, when I was in love with you,&quot; m. 8-10. 74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>&quot;Oh, when I was in love with you,&quot; m. 11-13. 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 12-14. 87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 16-17. 87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 24-28; &quot;Is my team ploughing,&quot; m. 5-7. 88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 24-35. 89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 9-12 and m. 24-34. 90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 52. 91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 61. 92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 52-83, chord progressions. 92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 54-63, vocal line. 93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 92-93. 95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 99-100. 96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 123. 98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 127. 99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>&quot;Bredon Hill,&quot; m. 128. 99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>&quot;Clun,&quot; m. 2-4. 108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. &quot;Clun,&quot; m. 5-11</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. &quot;Clun,&quot; m. 12-13</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. &quot;Clun,&quot; m. 61-66</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. &quot;Clun,&quot; m. 57-59</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. &quot;Clun,&quot; m. 61-63</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. &quot;Clun,&quot; m. 66-69</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This examination of Ralph Vaughan Williams' song cycle to poetry of Alfred Edward Housman, "On Wenlock Edge," will follow primarily two avenues of approach. First, following a brief biographical sketch of Vaughan Williams' career prior to the composition of "On Wenlock Edge," will be a discussion of Vaughan Williams' and Housman's respective aesthetic philosophies. In order to lay the background for certain salient characteristics of this cycle, parallels as well as differences in their artistic thinking will be explained. Secondly, a poetic analysis will precede the musical analysis of each song in order to differentiate between the original intent of the poet and the interpretation of the poetry by Vaughan Williams.

Just as a musical composition involves the manipulation and ordered combination of sounds, a poetic composition generates its life through an arrangement of words or groups of words; and, although, as with music, the aesthetic result is the final consideration, there is a necessary and indispensable craft or technique which the poet must use.

What is undeniable is that manner and matter, the theme and the way in which it is expressed, the meaning and structure, cannot be separated without
vital injury to the poem. Nevertheless, since the anatomy of verse is important to an understanding of poetry, we may temporarily anesthetize the poem, as it were, lay it on the table and examine distinct parts of it. But we know very well that only when these organs or members, which we are studying separately, function together in one body will the poem breathe and move like the living thing it is.

The method must not obscure the aesthetic communication. "Detail is of enormous importance, . . . but it must always be subordinated to the whole."² It is obvious that "no two actions, no two moments of life, can be quite the same; but the words for them may very well be the same."³ It thus becomes the composer's task to happily meet the poet's thought in a new and unique expression in song. Therefore, the object of the ensuing analysis and discussion is to discover what elements are combined, and how they are arranged to create the poetry and the music and to arrive at a valid judgment of the music's appropriateness for the poetry.

The musical analysis of each song will include an investigation of formal, harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic elements, but the primary purpose of this exposition will be to indicate the aesthetic implications of the musical composition. This study is not an explanation of trends or

special characteristics of Vaughan Williams' musical development. Neither is it an attempt to evaluate his contribution to the English or international musical community. It is submitted rather with a view toward explaining some of the technical features of the poetry and music so that the total aesthetic possibilities of the cycle may be more fully appreciated and understood.

Ralph Vaughan Williams, born on October 12, 1872, was the son of Reverend Arthur Vaughan Williams, Rector of Down Ampney, Gloucestershire. The young Vaughan Williams was sent to preparatory school at Rottingdean in 1882, where he was taught piano by C. T. West, who introduced him to the music of Bach; and violin by W. M. Quirke, an Irishman and well known British teacher at that time. He was then educated at Charterhouse in London (1887-1890); at the Royal College of Music (1890-1892); and at Trinity College, Cambridge (1892-1895). While still an undergraduate at Cambridge he took the degree of Bachelor of Music (1894), and returned to the Royal College of Music for further study with such men as George Grove, Arthur Sullivan, C. H. H. Parry, and Charles Stanford (1895-1896). In 1890 a visit to Munich, and another

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to Bayreuth, introduced him to the music of Richard Wagner at first hand. He also went to the Akademie der Kunst in Berlin, studying there under Max Bruch. Some time after his marriage to Adeline Fisher on the ninth day of October, 1897, he took his doctorate in music at Cambridge; and though it virtually completed his formal music education, he certainly did not stop studying and writing music. He was not compelled to earn a living from his music as he had a private income, but he devoted his time to it in an intensely professional manner.

In 1903 he went to Paris to acquire "a little French polish" at the hands of Maurice Ravel. After learning from Ravel a new, lighter, more colorful kind of instrumentation he returned to England and wrote, among other less important works, "The Wasps" for orchestra, "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis" for strings, and the composition under consideration in this thesis, "On Wenlock Edge" for tenor and piano quintet.

In addition to his formal training Vaughan Williams was profoundly influenced by his closest friend, Gustav Holst. He first met Holst in 1895 and though they were both somewhat

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7Foss, Vaughan Williams, p. 13.
8Day, Vaughan Williams, pp. 15-16.
9Ibid., p. 22.
10Ibid., pp. 23-25.
reserved by nature they became close friends at once. The two men held each other in high esteem, and each was always ready to offer companionship, advice, and kindly criticism if and when such was requested by the other. Holst was not Vaughan Williams' only friend, but he was by far the most important. 11

The native folksong tradition of England and Vaughan Williams' own personal dedication to preserving England's musical heritage were important factors in shaping his eventual contribution and artistic development.

Vaughan Williams is remembered... as one of the great folksong collectors. 12 Like Bartok, Vaughan Williams collected folksongs at a time when the harvest had long since been gathered in the "less backward" musical countries, but like them... he did not merely treat folksong as a patch to be sewn on old Teutonic garments. It became a fundamental element of his entire personal idiom—melody, rhythm, form and texture. But it was by no means the only element, and his eventual use of it was far removed from that of a dilettante or an academic analyst. 13

Works which show the direct influence of folksong are three "Norfolk Rhapsodies" (1905-1906), and an extended orchestral work called "In The Fen Country," the last revision of which came in 1907. 14

11 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
12 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
13 Ibid., p. 20.
Another very important contribution was "The English Hymnal" which he edited and for which he composed and arranged many hymns. This work, completed in 1906, in its own way played a part in the renaissance of English music. 14

"On Wenlock Edge," written in 1909, thus appears early in a career which ended August 26, 1958 after a long life of public service.15 He continued to compose vigorously and completed his ninth symphony at the age of eighty-five. He was prolific in every vocal and instrumental medium with the possible exception of keyboard instruments. 16

14 Ibid., p. 22.
16 A complete Catalogue of Works may be found in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians.
CHAPTER II

THE AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHIES OF RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
AND ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN

The poems for "On Wenlock Edge" were taken from the book, A Shropshire Lad, by Alfred Edward Housman (1859-1936). Housman began writing the sixty-three poems of A Shropshire Lad in September, 1890, and completed them sometime after November, 1895.1 It was almost fifteen years after the poet finished his poems before Vaughan Williams set to music the six poems of "On Wenlock Edge." The composer had just recently returned from Paris and his studies with Ravel. One of the few published statements from Ralph Vaughan Williams' pen concerning his song cycle is found in his "Musical Autobiography."2

After three months I came home with a bad attack of French fever and wrote a string quartet which caused a friend to say that I must have been having tea with Debussy, and a song cycle with several atmospheric effects, but I did not succumb to the temptation of writing a piece about a cemetery, and Ravel paid me a compliment of telling me that I was the only pupil who n'crit pas de ma musique."2

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1 Tom Burns Haber, The Manuscript Poems of A. E. Housman (Minneapolis, 1955), pp. 18-21.

This single quotation by the composer would tend to indicate that "On Wenlock Edge" did not make very much of an impression on the musical world of the early twentieth century. Quite the contrary is true however.

By far the most popular of all the settings and the one which has occasioned the most discussion is Ralph Vaughan Williams' "On Wenlock Edge." There are two schools of thought on the greatness of this song-cycle, one group contending that Vaughan Williams has done a beautiful interpretation of Housman, the other insisting that "On Wenlock Edge" (despite its fame) is a gross misconception of what A. E. Housman tried to say. Here is what A. Williams-Ellis, a prominent London book-reviewer, said on the occasion of the appearance of Housman's "Last Poems:"

I think not a few people who did not come under the influence of "A Shropshire Lad" when it appeared have been put off by hearing "Bredon Hill" set to music and sung in drawing rooms in an orgy of sentimentality. Every rhythm is altered, every meaning falsified. Quite to the contrary is this letter to "The Times," written by a correspondent a few days after Housman's death.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS AND HOUSMAN
To the Editor of "The Times"

Sir, As you so truly state in your to-day's issue, "Housman's poems hold in simple, imperishable feelings of humanity." It might be well then at this juncture to remember another poet, a poet of music, Vaughan Williams. His settings to Housman's "Shropshire Lad" have done more than anything else to make his poetry known to thousands of wireless listeners and to all lovers of English poetry and music. Can anyone forget the haunting poignance of Williams' interpretation of "Summer Time on Bredon?" I think not.

I am, &c

Ernest A. Knight
Syon House, East Budleigh, S. Devon
May 2.
(The Times (London) May 9th, 1936, p. 15)\(^3\)

Housman himself seems to have been indifferent to musical settings of his poetry. "I never hear the music, so I do not suffer."\(^4\) In spite of his seemingly unconcerned attitude toward music, Housman, as well as Vaughan Williams, has expressed himself quite clearly with regard to his aesthetic philosophy. Thus it is important that this analysis of "On Wenlock Edge" be preceded by a comparison of both artists' aesthetic ideals and attitudes.

Vaughan Williams' affinity for English folk-song colors and permeates his total contribution. This affinity can partly be demonstrated by an examination of the texts which he used in his songs.\(^5\) "A study of the words he has selected for his songs and choral works, . . . sheds light upon certain elements of his temperament and taste which are manifested in much of his composition."\(^6\)

Vaughan Williams . . . quite consciously aimed at doing for English music what Smetana and Mussorgsky had done for the music of Bohemia and Russia respectively -- developing it on its own lines


\(^6\)Ibid.
independently of the Teutonic tradition. Basing one's idiom on English folksong . . . was the most natural way of doing this, yet it was patently not enough simply to force "English" themes into formal moulds derived ultimately from the structure of folk music of quite a different nature.7

He set out to learn the nature of the English folk-song by personal experience and "went among the people . . . to Essex, mainly around Brentwood; . . . in Norfolk, particularly around King's Lynn; . . . in Sussex, mainly from parts not far from Leith Hill; . . . and to Yorkshire and Wiltshire."8 However he did not make his compositions simply copies of folk-song. Instead:

the folk-song was, as it were, the spring that released his true personality, even more than the model on which he built his style. What he gained from it was a tonal freedom and a melodic idiom that fertilized his music; what he made of it was a creation of his own genius.9

Vaughan Williams himself said as he recalled his "reaction to the tune of the 'Cherry-tree carol',"10 that it was:

more than simple admiration for a fine tune, though I did not then naturally realize the implications involved in that sense of intimacy. This sense came upon me more strongly in 1893 when I first discovered "Dives and Lazarus" in English Country Songs. Here, as before with Wagner, I had

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7Day, Vaughan Williams, p. 22.
8Ibid., p. 19.
9Ibid.
a sense of recognition - "here's something which I have known all my life -- only I didn't know it." 11

How Vaughan Williams felt about those who criticized folk-song composers is clearly seen in this quotation:

There has been a lot of cheap wit expended on folk-song composers. The matter seems to boil down to two accusations:

(1) That it is "cheating" to make use of folk-song material. This is really nothing more than the old complaint of the vested interests who are annoyed when anyone drinks a glass of pure water which he can get free, rather than a glass of beer which will bring profit to the company. This appears to involve a moral rather than an artistic question; from the point of view of musical excellence it seems to me that so long as good music is made it matters very little how it is made or who makes it. If a composer can, by tapping the sources hidden in folk-song, make beautiful music, he will be disloyal to his art if he does not make full use of such an avenue of beauty.

(2) The second accusation is made by people who affect to scorn what is "folky" because it does not come with the ken of their airless snuggeries, because it does not require any highly paid teachers to inculcate it or the purchase of textbooks with a corresponding royalty to the author. It is really a case of vested interest once again. 12

He was not at all concerned whether his music might not be completely original; indeed he felt that originality has nothing to do with true artistic value.

The object of art is to stretch out to the ultimate realities through the medium of beauty. The duty of the composer is to find the mot juste. It does not matter if this word has been said a thousand

11 ibid., p. 32.
12 ibid., p. 33.
times before, as long as it is the right thing to say at the moment. If it is not the right thing to say, however unheard of it may be, it is of no artistic value. Music which is unoriginal is so, not simply because it has been said before, but because the composer has not taken the trouble to make sure that this was the right thing to say at the right moment.\textsuperscript{13}

A few years later Vaughan Williams, in an article which appeared in the \textit{R.C.M. Magazine}, Volume IX, Number 1, dated "Christmas Term, 1912," made this statement concerning English composers generally:

\ldots for though his appeal should be in the long run universal, art, like charity, should begin at home. If it is to be of any value it must grow out of the very life of himself, the community in which he lives, the nation to which he belongs.\textsuperscript{14}

This statement summarizes and helps pinpoint his basic philosophy toward composition and his chosen musical heritage. It contains the essence of his almost belligerent attitude toward English composers and other English musicians who try to import a musical heritage from Germany, France, or any other country. He was adamant in defending the English tradition.

\begin{quote}
We must be our own tailors, we must cut for ourselves, try on for ourselves, and finally wear our own home-made garments, which, even if they are homey and home-spun, will at all events fit our bodies and keep them warm; otherwise, if we pick about among great ideas of foreign composers and try to cover our own nakedness with them, we are in danger of being
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 197.
the musical counterparts of the savage clothed in nothing but a top-hat and a string of beads.  

Although he was very interested in keeping with a truly English tradition, "he did not adopt the folk-song manner as a conscious nationalistic pose." 16 In fact, Sydney Grew implies that eventually Vaughan Williams outgrew the conscious use of the folk-song style altogether.

Once he turned the fortieth year of his age, his music ceased to reveal the direct influence of folk-song. The substance of that native art had by then passed essentially into his nature, to manifest itself in music that was highly original and exclusively individual. 17

Garvie comments on the radical change during Vaughan Williams' development from his earlier "folk-song" preoccupation to his later works. "Who, one wonders, could have predicted from the first two symphonies or 'On Wenlock Edge' that Vaughan Williams would make his greatest contribution in the symphony and related form." 18

Vaughan Williams certainly realized the limitations of

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15Ralph Vaughan Williams, "Who Wants the English Composer?" included in Ralph Vaughan Williams, A Study, by Hubert Foss, p. 199.


17Sydney Grew, "Musicians," The Midland Musician or The British Musician, No. 1, (Birmingham, January, 1926).

the folk-song for he described it as "purely melodic."\textsuperscript{19} He said; "A folk-song is at its best a supreme work of art, but it does not say all that is to be said in music; it is limited in its scope: . . ."\textsuperscript{20}

He also recognized that a nation without a rich folk-song background could still produce a national tradition and style.

Folk-song is not the cause of national music, it is a manifestation of it. The cultivation of folk-song is only one aspect of the desire to found an art on the fundamental principles which are essential to its well-being. National music is not necessarily folk-song; on the other hand folk-song is, by nature necessarily national.\textsuperscript{21}

Despite his love for folk-song and its profound influence on his musical style, he owes much of his inspiration to the numerous composers and other musical personalities with whom he studied as well as great composers before his time. He was very conscious of the teachers' value.

The way to get the best out of instruction is to put oneself entirely in the hands of one's instructor, and try to find out all about his method regardless of one's personality, keeping of course a secret \textit{eppur si muova} up one's sleeve. Young students are too much obsessed with the idea of expressing their own personalities.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{22}Vaughan Williams, (Foss), "A Musical Autobiography," p. 27.
Nevertheless, he was convinced of the composer's own right to break the rules set down by his teachers. He relates a conversation with one of his teachers, Charles Stanford of the Royal College of Music, in which he asserted his independence. The occasion was a composition lesson and Stanford had just finished looking over some of Vaughan Williams' work.

Stanford begins: "Damnably ugly, my boy. Why do you write such things?" "Because I like them." "But you can't like them, they're not music." "I shouldn't write them if I didn't like them." . . . I really must have been unteachable and hopelessly obstinate.23

His teachers were not all English for he studied with the German Max Bruch and the Frenchman Maurice Ravel. He was greatly influenced by Richard Wagner for whose music he claimed to have had a "sense of recognition."24 He even claimed for Wagner a universal influence when he wrote, "it goes without saying that Holst, like every young musician who approached manhood in 1890, came strongly under the influence of Wagner."25 Of Johann Sebastian Bach, the primary example in his argument for national music, he wrote: "No one could be more local, in his origin, his life work, and his fame for nearly a

23 Ibid., p. 28.
24 Ibid., p. 32.
hundred years after his death,..."26 In his great admiration for Bach, Vaughan Williams also expresses his great faith in the common man.

Through all the changes and chances the beauty of his (Bach's) music abides because his music appeals to everyone - not only to the aesthete, the musicologist, or the propagandist, but above all to Whitman's "Divine Average" - that great middle class from whom nearly all that is worth while in religion, painting, poetry, and music has sprung.27

"We may be quite sure that the composer who tries to be cosmopolitan from the outset will fail, not only with the world at large, but with his own people as well."28

It is evident through the preceding statements that Vaughan Williams was extremely conscious of his musical heritage, his so-called native musical language, and his personal debt to his teachers and great musicians; and that he was convinced that a composer can be successful only by being true to his own time and place. Yet he also possessed a rebellious nature, often speaking out against the established traditions of English music. On the surface it would seem that Vaughan Williams was indeed aesthetically divided between two extremes, the traditional and the progressive. A book, edited by Ursula

26 Vaughan Williams, National Music, p. 5.


28 Vaughan Williams, National Music, p. 4.
Vaughan Williams, Ralph Vaughan Williams' second wife, and Imogene Holst, Gustav Holst's wife, containing letters written by the two men to each other, seems to support this dual nature in its title, *Heirs and Rebels*. He rebelled against what he called falseness in music, that is, music written by a composer who tries to write with a complete disregard for his own personality and national heritage. Writing in 1902 for *The Vocalist* on the subject of "good taste," he makes some strong statements concerning the young English composers of the time.

These "rising young musicians" lack neither good teachers nor good models, nor good concerts, nor good opportunities of bringing their works to a hearing; nevertheless, all their promise seems to be nipped in the bud by the blighting influence of "good taste."

The truth is that the young Englishman is too musicianly. . . . Many a young composer has stifled his natural impulses in the desire to be musicianly. If he has elected to be "romantic" he considers himself lost unless he crushes all his power of invention under an entanglement of trombones and bass tubas -- and all because Wagner's special inspiration required special expression. If he favors the "classical" school, he thinks it only becoming to make a show of exercising Brahms's self-restraint, without considering what a storehouse of invention Brahms possessed out of which to deny himself.

What we want in England is real music, even if it be only a music-hall song. Provided it possesses real feeling and real life, it will be worth all the off-scourings of the classics in the world.29

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His seeming rebelliousness is thus resolved in his insistence that composers, especially English composers, become true heirs by rebelling against anything foreign to their natural, inherited personalities.

A quick glance at the titles and texts of many of his compositions reveals another of Vaughan Williams' characteristics, that of his predilection for supernatural or mystical subject matter. For instance, there are: Walt Whitman's "Toward an Unknown Region," "Flos Campi" from The Song of Solomon, "Thanksgiving for Victory" from the Bible, Shakespeare and Kipling, "Dona Nobis Pacem" by Whitman, "The House of Light" and "Willow Wood" by Dante Gabriel Rosetti, "Ryders to the Sea" by J. M. Synge, to name only a few.

The oratorio "Sancta Civitas" for soloists, choruses and orchestra was composed to a text selected from the Revelation of St. John. This score is prefaced by a quotation from Plato's "Phaedo" which serves as a kind of apologia for having written an oratorio to this obscure and highly symbolic text and also as a declaration of Vaughan Williams' belief and a witness to the mysticism of his temperament.

... Now, it would not be proper for an intelligent man to insist that these things are just as I have described them; however, since we believe that the soul is immortal, one may justifiably and properly venture to think that this or something like it is

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true regarding our souls and their habitation. For the venture is a noble one; and one should repeat such beliefs to one's self as if one were chanting an incantation.\textsuperscript{31}

From his own pen Vaughan Williams has attested to his belief in the very spiritual nature of music and art in general. He writes; "All art is the imperfect human half-realization of that which is spiritually perfect."\textsuperscript{32} And again:

Before going any further may we take it that the object of an art is to obtain a partial revelation of that which is beyond human senses and human faculties - of that, in fact, which is spiritual? And that the means we employ to induce this revelation are those very senses and faculties themselves?\textsuperscript{33}

"It is just this suggestion of the supernatural or mystical coupled with the folk-sông nature of Housman's poems that was attractive to Vaughan Williams' nature."\textsuperscript{34} In their attempts to explain the essence of their respective arts, both men disclose certain common characteristics, despite their seeming philosophical differences and their public conflict.\textsuperscript{35}

Housman wrote with plain words, words of universal and

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{31}ibid., pp. 141-142, (Note: The translation of Plato's 'Phaedo' is by John F. Hallwarks.).
\textsuperscript{32}Vaughan Williams, "Gustav Holst: An Essay and a Note," p. 94.
\textsuperscript{33}Vaughan Williams, "The Letter and the Spirit," p. 54.
\textsuperscript{34}Kimmel, "Vaughan Williams' Choice of Words," p. 133.
\textsuperscript{35}See page 68.
\end{footnotes}
common understanding. "He employs the most simple and unso-
phisticated meters and verse forms and uses words of remarkable
plainness and simplicity; yet the poems possess an emotional
power and lyric beauty that give them a permanent place among
the lyric poetry of England."36

These qualities can be seen in "When I was one-and-
twenty," number thirteen of A Shropshire Lad.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty,
And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.37

Housman was not as outspoken as Vaughan Williams. He
kept to himself more often than not, but he was not at all
vague in his own expression of what poetry meant to him. In
the book, The Name and Nature of Poetry, which contains the
text of a Leslie Stephen Lecture he delivered at Cambridge in
1933, is revealed much of his attitude toward his art. While

36 Kimmel, "Vaughan Williams' Choice of Words," p. 133.
37 A. E. Housman, A Shropshire Lad, (Mount Vernon, New
Vaughan Williams was interested in how music reflected and affected the artistic impulse of English people generally; Housman was content to write his verses with no such concrete purpose in mind. Thus he had little to say about whether poetry should first of all be "the expression of the humble." His artistic ideals would not come in conflict with any kind of national or regional purpose, because he was not at all preoccupied with overtly changing the direction of a poetic tradition, whether it be indigenous or imported. On the other hand, like Vaughan Williams, he insisted on sincerity in his art. Furthermore, his attitude toward the nature of poetry was that his art, above all others, was an art of the spirit, not the intellect. "Meaning is of the intellect, poetry is not." The following isolated quotations from The Name and Nature of Poetry are presented without intervening comment to avoid premature conclusions.

When I examine my mind and try to discern clearly in the matter, I cannot satisfy myself that there are any such things as poetical ideas. No truth, it seems to me, is too precious, no observation too profound, and no sentiment too exalted to be expressed in prose. The utmost that I could admit is that some ideas do, while others do not, lend themselves kindly to poetical expression; and that these receive from poetry an enhancement which glorifies and almost transfigures them, and which is not perceived to be a separate thing except by analysis.  


39 Ibid., p. 34.
Poetry indeed seems to be more physical than intellectual. In discussing the poetry of Milton he states:

... the meaning is a poor foolish disappointing thing in comparison with the verses themselves... in these six simple words of Milton - Nymphs and shepherds, dance no more - what is it that can draw tears, as I know it can, to the eyes of more readers than one? What in the world is there to cry about? Why have the mere words the physical effect of pathos when the sense of the passage is blithe and gay? I can only say, because they are poetry.

Poetry is not the thing said but a way of saying it. Can it be isolated and studied by itself? For the combination of language with its intellectual content, its meaning, is as close a union as can well be imagined. Is there such a thing as pure unmingled poetry, poetry independent of meaning? Even when poetry has a meaning, as it usually has, it may be inadvisable to draw it out.

It is thus apparent that Housman was not particularly interested in teaching through his poetry, much less attempting to return to an idiom exclusively English. That one man covertly attempted to become more British and that the other man did not particularly work for a British idiom does not interfere with the fact that both were British by birth, environment, and spirit. It is on the spiritual plane that Housman and Vaughan Williams are able to find similarity of expression.

Vaughan Williams and Housman have much in common, for a comparison of a number of works... suggest that Vaughan Williams' preoccupation

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41 Ibid. 42 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
with vague and mystical subjects is second only to his love of the English countryside.43

A Shropshire Lad possessed the common language; unsophisticated meters and verse forms; words of remarkable plainness and simplicity, yet possessed of emotional power and lyrical beauty; the expression of an intense love of rural England, rustic scenes and rustic people; and a sympathetic understanding of the emotional reactions of rustic youth45 which found agreement with Vaughan Williams' belief that "music is above all things the art of the common man, . . . the wildest howl of the savage, or the most careless whistling of the errand boy is nothing else than an attempt to reach into the infinite, which we attempt to call art. . . . Music is above all others the art of the humble."46

43 Ibid., p. 8.
45 Ibid., p. 133
46 Vaughan Williams, National Music, p. 115.
"On Wenlock Edge," the title of both the cycle and the first song of the cycle, is poem thirty-one of *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. However, Housman probably did not write the sixty-three poems of *A Shropshire Lad* in the order in which they appear in the several editions of the poems. Nor does the order in which Vaughan Williams arranges the six poems that he uses in his cycle coincide with the order in the editions of the poems. Housman relates to his audience at Cambridge during the Leslie Stephen Lectures, May 9, 1933, 'The Name and Nature of Poetry,' how the stanzas of *A Shropshire Lad* came to him one after another, some spontaneously, some 'with a little coaxing after tea,' and some composed after much "laborious business."

The complete poem, "On Wenlock Edge," is quoted below:

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

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

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

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

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

"With special attention to its structure 'On Wenlock Edge' may be read from both historical and dramatic perspectives as an increasingly tragic comment on inevitable human attrition."³

Wenlock Edge, a west-country hill, overlooks Wenlock in Salop or Shropshire, the region about Ludlow.⁴ The Wrekin is an extinct volcano and Uricon is the Roman name for the location now called Wenlock.⁵ However, more complex than this past/present comparison is the nature/man parallel which often appears in the imagery,⁶ a parallel reinforced by

² Housman, A Shropshire Lad, p. 34.
³ Spiro Peterson, Housman's 'On Wenlock Edge (SL 31)', The Explicator, XV (April, 1957), no pagination.
⁴ Robert Wooster Stallman, "Housman's 'On Wenlock Edge (SL 31)'," The Explicator, III, No. 4 (February, 1945), no pagination.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Peterson, "Housman's 'On Wenlock Edge (SL 31)'," no pagination.
the phrases: "the gale of life" (line 15), and "the tree of men" (line 16). Time is presented as the stage over which men both ancient and modern act out their individual but similar lives. Each man is compared to a tree in the forest; even though each tree is an entity, they are all alike, whether they lived a thousand years ago or are living now. The activating force, "the gale of life," is ever abiding, fierce and yet not malevolent. "Man yet endures, though his small delights are stripped from his sapling, scattered upon the stream of time."7 "Trees and men are short lived; the wind and trouble that vex them are eternal."8

This describes merely the outline, the bare skeleton, the superficial thematic material of the poem. On the other hand, the content of the poem, that part which the composer seeks to illuminate and complement, involves the stark transition from an impersonal "English yeoman" (line eleven) to the more personal "I" (line sixteen), and how "I" relates to time and fate. From the first line, wherein the place, "Wenlock Edge," is stated and the atmosphere is described as "the woods in trouble," the poem unfolds the thoughts of one man as he contemplates his particular place in the inevitable cycle and continuous flow of life from birth to "ashes" under

7 Ibid.
Uricon." What has Housman done with his words to give this poem its organic qualities? What factors make this work a poetic existence which can be compared with the unfolding of a flower as seen with the aid of a time lapse film, slowly struggling to full bloom and then quickly wilting? An examination of the words and their respective contexts will help reveal the nature of the poetic organism.

One of the most striking features of this poem, a feature attractive to musicians and especially characteristic of Housman's poetry in general is its sense of regular poetic rhythm and its homogeneous poetic meter. In this poem Housman makes use of the most regular of poetic meters, iambic tetrameter quatrain. The lyrical quality afforded by the

9 White, in his article "A. E. Housman and Music," p. 219, states that "Housman, with small musical background and showing little use of musical terminology in his poems and letters, and with a distaste for listening to complex, highly developed music must have had (to put it tritely) music in his soul. This is shown by the lyrical quality of his poems and by the fact that many composers have attempted to catch his musical spirit in their settings."

10 Rhythm is defined by Abercrombie in Poetry; Its Music and Meaning (London, 1932), p. 11, as "in language ... any noticeable series of accents."

11 Ibid., meter is "a series of accents which is not only noticeable, but also forms a definite repeating pattern."


13 Ibid., p. 562, iambic tetrameter quatrain - iamb, "an unaccented followed by an accented syllable (avoid); tetrameter, four feet (A poetic foot is defined as the metrical unit, a combination of one accented and one or more unaccented syllables.); quatrain, a four line stanza."
regular rhythm and the alternating end-rhymes offer a sense of unity against which the dramatic qualities, inherent in the few periodic rhythmical irregularities, are given dimension. For example, in the first stanza, line three, the caesura or the main pause within the line after the word "gale," is necessary to set it apart from the word "it." Likewise, this short break supports the feeling of breathlessness and the swift rush of the first stanza by imitating a quick gulp for air. In line seven where the iambic pattern gives way to a quasi-anapestic line the emphasis falls on the words "old" and "wind." This interpolation, coupled with the liquid nature of the words themselves, stretches out the line as the poet clenches the past/present imagery. Such metrical manipulation not only combats monotony, but also helps shape the structure in which the words may take on special value, that is, value which the poet gives a word by its noticeable release from the artificial existence of an average (dictionary) meaning into the individual vigor of some particular vitality.

It is just this special contextual value that characterizes the words "trouble," "fleece," "heaves," "anger," and "threshed" -

14 Ibid., p. 564.
15 Ibid., p. 562, anapest, "Two accented syllables followed by an accented syllable (intervene)."
words which give meaning to the man/nature parallel of the first two stanzas. Likewise, the poet would be hard pressed to give "the gale" breath and personality without the sinister and personifying characteristics inherent in the hiss of "forest fleece," "heaves," "plies," "Severn," and "leaves." "A trembling creature is suggested in the ambiguous 'His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves',"\(^\text{17}\) while the "whiteness" expressed through "snow" and "fleece" adds the dimension of color.

"Still there is nothing poignant in what, at best, is a platitude about human life, past and present. The last three stanzas, however, rescue the poem from a fatal conventionality of theme."\(^\text{18}\) The poem leaves the purely historical reflection of stanzas one and two and focuses on the inward struggle of the man, for now the personal pronoun "my" is used for the first time in line nine. The personal implications are supported by new metrical irregularities. Lines nine and sixteen, the two bracketing lines of stanzas three and four, and line thirteen, are built on one dactylic\(^\text{19}\) foot followed by three trochaic\(^\text{20}\) feet. Line nine helps to shift

\(^\text{17}\) Stallman, "Housman's On Wenlock Edge (SL 31)."

\(^\text{18}\) Peterson, "Housman's On Wenlock Edge (SL 31)."

\(^\text{19}\) Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, p. 562; dactyl, "one accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables (happily)."

\(^\text{20}\) Ibid., trochee, "one accented followed by one unaccented syllable (only)."
the attention of the reader to the personal involvement, line thirteen serves to weld stanzas three and four together, and line sixteen, the climax of the poem, drives home the conclusion on the masculine ending and personal pronoun "now 'tis I." And yet between "my" (line nine) and "I" (line sixteen) there is a noticeable avoidance of the personal pronoun. It is the "English yeoman," "the Roman," and "him" which are the objects of the "mysterious attrition."21 Thus, "the drama of the poem is made possible partly by its restraint - by what it leaves unsaid, ..."22

Stanza five clarifies the parallel between stanzas one and two and stanzas three and four as it draws the force of time and fate into the personal drama of the present. Again the strength of the drama is emphasized by understatement and metrical identity. The meter of stanza five is the same as stanza one, a factor which enhances the structural symmetry and links the beginning with the conclusion and, by avoiding all personal pronouns in the last stanza the poet liberates the poem from a sense of contemporary and fixed time to show that "the Force, which meant disturbance or change for nature, destruction for past civilization, now signifies oblivion for the speaker himself."23 This return to the iambic tetrameter

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21 Peterson, "Housman's On Wenlock Edge (SL 31)," no pagination.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
quatrain eases the tension of the personal drama and makes for a well proportioned metrical form - a type of poetic coda which serves a dual purpose, summation and conclusion.

Combined with other factors the overall metrical organization permeates and coincides with the organic growth of the poem. The first stanza builds to a secondary climax in line three where the first rhythmic irregularity occurs while the second stanza builds to a climax in the next irregular line (seven). This becomes the primary climax of the first section. The irregular rhythm of line nine performs two functions: that of setting apart stanzas three and four from stanzas one and two and that of providing the first of three unifying lines, nine, thirteen, and sixteen of stanzas three and four. The rhythm of line sixteen, the strongest of the whole poem with its masculine ending, coincides with the primary climax of the poem. Stanza five, the most regular and straightforward, forms a type of poetic coda.

Ralph Vaughan Williams, in his setting of the poem, "On Wenlock Edge" capitalizes on the three divisions of the poem, that is, A, stanzas one and two, measure one through the first beat of measure thirty-one; B, stanzas three and four, beginning on the second beat of measure thirty-one through the third beat of measure fifty-seven; stanza five, beginning on the third beat of measure fifty-seven through measure seventy-seven. These divisions separate the otherwise strophic composition into three distinct sections. The
vocal line is declamatory and non-lyrical, almost in the spirit of narration; and the accompaniment imitates the "gale of life" over which the recitative-like vocal line relates the physical setting and personal reaction to the "gale." It is, in fact, the different ways Vaughan Williams creates the sound of the wind in the accompaniment and the varying degrees of the vocal line which differentiates the sections; the basic musical material is homogeneous throughout. Likewise, each section has its distinct orchestral texture and key centers. The first section in g-minor is quite thick and uniform; the second section for the most part in e-flat is generally lighter, more subdued and irregular; and the Coda, returning to g-minor, is a combination of the two previous textures.

This song, and indeed, the whole cycle is built on several melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic features, cyclical elements which identify one song with another. At the first appearance of the motive or pattern a complete musical example will be quoted and labeled. Thereafter, when cyclical features appear they will be referred to by letter name. However, if a cyclical element is altered beyond immediate and obvious recognition, an additional quotation will be made in order to more clearly point out the cyclical relationship.
"On Wenlock Edge" begins with an instrumental introduction, measure one through the third beat of measure six employing the full accompaniment ensemble and moving through a series of parallel first inversion chords in the first two and one-half measures. (Parallel movement is one of Vaughan Williams' most salient compositional techniques, a feature which he uses throughout this song cycle, but, because he uses it so widely in most of his works, one that will not be designated specifically as a cyclical element.) The tonality centers around g with an emphasis on the flatted seventh scale step, f-natural. Nine cyclical elements appear in this first introduction, almost a fantastic number for so short a section, but, as will be seen as the several songs unfold, each of these elements is used again and again.

Element A is characterized by a leap of a third followed by two or three tones a whole or half step apart. This example is from the first three beats of measure one, second violin.

Fig. 1--Cyclical element A

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Element \( B \) has the shape of an arch, but the intervals are not always the same. Besides its characteristic shape, the fact that it almost always returns to its beginning note also identifies this element. The example is from the last beat of measure one through the first two beats of measure two, second violin.

![Fig. 2--Cyclical element B](image)

The arch figure is inverted for cyclical element \( C \). The example is from the first three and one-half beats of measure two, second violin.

![Fig. 3--Cyclical element C](image)

Elements \( D \) and \( E \) are identified by their respective rhythmic peculiarities: \( D \) - dotted rhythm and \( E \) - a triplet pattern. The example of the dotted rhythm is from the last two beats of measure two, second violin.
The example for the triplet pattern is from the first two beats of measure two, second violin.

Element $F$ involves both the harmonic and melodic use of the interval of the fourth. Vaughan Williams emphasizes the fourth by its contextual placement. The fourth is unique in that its character may be changed by its surroundings. The examples are from the first measure, right hand of the piano part and the last two beats of measure three, right hand of the piano part, respectively.

Element G is the pedal tone which begins on the third beat of measure three in the strings. Sometimes the single pedal tone is expanded to a full chord pedal.

Element H features an alternation figure, first two beats of measure four in the piano, alternating between tones of different chords. In this instance the alternation is between $f$ and $g$, but subsequent examples sometimes feature wider intervals. This element should not be confused with a measured tremolo which alternates between two tones of the same chord.
extended up-beat and may take various melodic and intervalic forms. This example appears on the last two beats of measure five, first violin.

![Fig. 9--Cyclical element I](image)

The vocal line begins on the fourth beat of measure six as a combination of elements B and F, the arch figure and the leap of a fourth, expanding the arch in measure nine and ten for the second line of the poem. Beneath this line the right hand of the piano part continues an arpeggiated pattern (see fig. 7) through the first beat of measure sixteen, a pattern which serves to unify the stanza and sustain the tonality. The second violin and viola add a sense of both restlessness and continuity with a tremolo pedal on C while the first violin points up each new line of the poetry with element I (fig. 9) or a variation of that element as in the last two beats of measure twelve.

![Fig. 10--"On Wenlock Edge," m. 12](image)
The left hand of the piano part and cello double the vocal line in measures seven through ten and repeat this melody, a variation of the vocal line, twice before the end of the stanza. The example is from measures eleven and twelve, cello and the left hand of the piano part.

Fig. 11-- "On Wenlock Edge," m. 11-12, cello and piano, l.h.

With the melodic interest shifted to the piano and the cello, the voice sings a declamatory line composed of repeated notes in measures eleven and twelve, cyclical element J, and a descending chromatic line in measure fourteen through the first two beats of measure sixteen, cyclical element K.

Fig. 12--Cyclical element J
The harmonic background for this stanza is derived from two sources: 1) Cyclical element $H$, an alternation between harmonies built up from $f$ and $g$ (from the third beat of measure five through nine on $g$; the first two beats of measure ten on $f$; from the third beat of measure ten through the second beat of measure twelve on $g$; the last two beats of measure twelve on $f$; and, measure thirteen through the second beat of measure fourteen on $g$); and 2) cyclical element $K$, a descending chromatic line from $g$ on beat three of measure thirteen to $e$-flat on the first beat of measure sixteen.

Stanza two, including its introduction, from the second beat of measure sixteen through the first beat of measure thirty-one is almost an exact repetition of stanza one; only the vocal line is altered slightly to accommodate the poetic rhythm. However, in measure twenty-five there is a curious emphasis of the word "city," an emphasis forced by Vaughan Williams' strophic treatment of the music.

Beginning on the second beat of measure thirty-one there is a transition composed of cyclical element $B$, expanded and
arpeggiated, and a tremolo pedal on d-flat. Here the storm moves into the background as if the singer has gone indoors and the wind is heard only in the distance. Vaughan Williams thins the texture to a single tremolo in the piano at measure thirty-four as the poetic mood focuses more intently on the personal drama; and the singer states, "Then, 'twas before my time," utilizing the repeated note element to support the more intimate attitude and the declamatory nature of the poetry. The storm seems to have subsided somewhat for the texture is more sparse and the accompaniment more restrained; but intermittent swells from the strings, employing a motive derived from element B, reminds the listener that the storm has not passed, but, indeed, is more gusty and unpredictable. The example is from the second beat of measure thirty-four through the second beat of measure thirty-five, first violin.

Likewise, this motive is effective for emphasizing the word "heave" in measure thirty-seven.

The music becomes more excited at measure thirty-nine to point up the dramatic parallel between the Roman and the present English yeoman. Here the voice begins a descending
chromatic line after being catapulted into position by the top three strings and the piano in the last two beats of measure thirty-eight, utilizing a variation of element I.

\[ \text{Fig. 15: } "On Wenlock Edge," \text{ m. 38} \]

At this point, measure thirty-nine, only the piano accompaniment is used in chromatically descending first inversion chords. The first violin doubles the voice at measure forty-one through the first beat of measure forty-three, adding support and color for the high vocal line.
The B section, poetic stanzas three and four, measures thirty-four through the first beat of measure fifty-five, centers around e-flat, the d-flat pedal emphasizing the natural minor scale. However, the chromatically derived progressions in the last half of each stanza tend to make the tonality somewhat ambiguous, but at the same time they enhance the restless spirit of the poetry.

The interlude between stanzas three and four, from the second beat of measure forty-three through the first beat of measure forty-five is identical to the transition from Section A to Section B, the second beat of measure thirty-one through measure thirty-three; but, stanza four is not quite an exact repetition of stanza three, for, like stanza two, there are slight alterations of the vocal line to emphasize certain words. The most important innovations are in measure fifty-three, where the voice ascends to g-natural, the climax of both the stanza and the whole song; and from measure fifty-two through the first beat of measure fifty-five where the cello plays a long sustained chromatic line similar to the violin solo in stanza three. With the climax reached at measure fifty-three and the fourth stanza completed at measure fifty-five, the song moves into the coda stanza with all the intensity of the climax. The Coda extends from the second beat of measure fifty-five through measure seventy-seven.

The Coda begins with an introductory passage with the
strings playing high on a frantic tremolo while the piano reiterates the introduction to Section A in a fast paced and condensed version, from the second beat of measure fifty-five through the third beat of measure fifty-seven. On the third beat of measure fifty-seven the upper three string parts soften to a piano tremolo on a major-minor ninth chord (\(d^b f a^b c^b e\)), while the singer, now past the introspective part of the poem, proclaims again, "The gale, it plies the saplings double" musically and poetically referring back to measures eleven and twelve. As the "gale" subsides, the strings soften even more. Beginning at measure sixty-one the music retards; the piano repeats half of the arpeggiated figure derived from the transition between Sections A and B, the last beat of measures thirty-one, thirty-two, forty-three and forty-four; while the unstable, pensive harmony in the strings returns to g in measure sixty-two. The return to g is accomplished by the a-flat resolving downward and the c-flat and d-flat resolving upward by half steps in measures sixty through sixty-two. The singer declares that the "gale...'twill soon be gone," but the accompaniment in measures sixty-two through sixty-four using material from the first section (see figures 8 and 11), asserts that only this one man will "soon be gone;" the storm will return and continue.
Vaughan Williams continues to combine and compress material from the previous stanzas, but completes the vocal line with a new and curiously ambiguous cadence emphasizing b-natural and e-natural in measures sixty-seven and sixty-eight. The effect is that of uncertainty on the part of the singer declaring his bewilderment with the fierce, yet
impartial nature of time and fate, or life itself. A postlude, built on cyclical elements B (see figs. 2 and 14), F and H progresses chromatically downward, cyclical element K, from e to d over an insistent reassertion of the authentic cadence to g minor. The texture thins and the dynamics decrease so that the song is allowed to die away and end somewhere after the last note is sounded.

The overall formal arrangement, then, is one of five stanzas, each a musical entity within itself, but organized into three sections on the basis of texture, vocal line and key center. A sense of organic growth to a singular climax is somewhat obscured by the intermittent interludes and a sense of beginning again with each new verse. The idea of a storm-scene, which Ernest Newman disclaims as "mere padding in the worst Wagnerian style,"26 seems to predominate the music so that the song is a complex orchestral structure rather than a solo song with accompaniment. Ernest Newman is quite harsh in his criticism of the song:

... he, Vaughan Williams, particularly fails whenever the vocal line, instead of being in the foreground of the picture, with a simple accompaniment has to be worked into the tissue of an elaborate instrumental piece, ... the poem loses its purely lyrical quality and becomes a mere piece of declamation to accompany a piece of descriptive instrumental

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writing, and in the second place the rhythmic values of the lines are mutilated to fit the predetermined rhythms of the instrumental picture.\textsuperscript{27}

However, there are those who praise Vaughan Williams' treatment of Housman's poetry. Edwin Evans states that the vocal line heightens the phonetic values of the verse immeasurably more often than is common in modern English song, and seldom, if ever, lowers them.\textsuperscript{28} It seems that the declamatory approach to the words is very effective in telling the story of the poem. However, there is merit in questioning the propriety of such melodramatic effects as the storm scene. The impression of fierceness which Vaughan Williams attempts is certainly vivid and the total picture is easily grasped.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., pp. 395-396.

\textsuperscript{28}Edwin Evans, "English Song and 'On Wenlock Edge'," \textit{The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular} (June 1, 1918), p. 248.
CHAPTER IV

FROM FAR, FROM EVE AND MORNING -
A POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS

The second song of the cycle is a setting of "From far, from eve and morning," number thirty-two of _A Shropshire Lad_.

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

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

Speak now, and I will answer;
How shall I help you, say;
Ere to the wind's twelve quarters
I take my endless way.¹

The poem's brevity adds to the elusiveness and extra-physical nature of the message. There is no conflict and only the slightest inter-personal drama, for the setting is in the poet's mind. The presence of two persons is implied, one physical, the other spiritual, although only the spirit speaks. It is the poet's spiritual self and is brought to seeming substance by the chance gathering of the "stuff of life." His mission is urgent, for the poet must relieve his soul through expression in poetry. His

¹Housman, _A Shropshire Lad_, p. 35.
sojourn is of uncertain length, but certainly short, and the poet must speak "now" and "quick" before the entanglements of physical life "disperse" the spirit and the opportunity is squelched by the inevitable march of time. It is this theme of the unrelenting passage of time which relates this poem to "On Wenlock Edge." "On Wenlock Edge" deals with the external forces which are continually active and ever present, while "From far, from eve and morning" portrays a moment inside the man, a moment allowed only by the individual's power to briefly exclude the external forces and, for himself alone to cause time to stand still for only a short period.

The poet achieves a strong sense of continuity and direction in the poem. When reading the poem there is a sensation of motion analogous to the common physical phenomenon of watching telephone poles while driving down the highway. The poles appear on the horizon almost mysteriously; advance with increasing momentum; pass quickly and then disappear as they had previously appeared, suddenly, and yet with a sense of continuity with other, now invisible poles. This sense of contact with something before and after the actual reading of the poem is made more poignant by the improbable combination of "eve" and "morning" and "yon twelve-winded sky;" while, the intangible quality of the spirit is identified with the nature of wind in the aspirant sound of "From far, from eve," "twelve-winded," "The stuff of life,"
and "Blew hither." The iambic trimeter pattern in the first three lines conveys the physical sensation of slow but steady movement, a movement which is soon given increased momentum by the enjambment \(^2\) of the third line into the fourth, signifying a sudden "woosh" as the spiritual nature of the poet takes form and announces "Here am I."

As if to allow time for a quick gulp of air, Housman has inserted dashes after "Now" and "apart." No sooner than he has caught his breath, the poem rushes along on the fast, clipped sound of the explosive consonants in "take," "quick," and "tell."

A curious reversal of the normal word order for the phrase "what you have" to "What have you" in line eight emphasizes the implied question in an otherwise imperative statement. (There is no question mark at the end of the sentence). Thus the spirit avoids a direct question, so he is able to not only request but to command a response with the same sentence.

The drive to the final exhortation at the end of line ten is intensified as the meter returns to regular iambic trimeter in line nine. No irregularity of rhythm is allowed to interfere with the thrust toward the final command, "say."

\(^2\) Enjambment is said to occur when "the end of the line does not coincide with a normal speech pause of any kind." Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, p. 564.
It is interesting to note the importance of the rhyme scheme in the forcefulness of the command, rhymes which make for a subtle emphasis on the word "say." The end rhymes of the first two stanzas sound ə, T, and ə. The word "say" introduces a new vowel sound, that of ə, one of the strongest and most forward placed vowels.

The liquid nature of the consonants in the last two lines and the sense of space offered by "the winds' twelve quarters" and "endless way," contribute to the feeling that the spiritual consciousness has spent its time for the present, and, like the telephone poles, must disappear.

For the setting of "From far, from eve and morning," Vaughan Williams has chosen modified ABA form with a very limited melodic range and few harmonic complexities. As in "On Wenlock Edge," the sections are differentiated on the basis of accompaniment texture, key center, and melodic scope. Indeed, no material is used throughout the song that cannot be traced back to "On Wenlock Edge." The song may possibly be called a "study in austerity," a quality implemented by its formal simplicity and material unity.

The first section, measures one through eleven, accompanied solely by the piano playing parallel major triadic chords, utilizes the first stanza of the poem. The harmony

centers around e major, but because of the constant shifting of accidentals it cannot be said to be in the key of e major; the progressions are derived melodically, not contrapuntally. The two and one-half measure introduction by the piano is derived melodically from element C, emphasizing the flatted seventh and sixth tones of the scale (d and c). The voice moves simply and freely over a line composed of cyclical elements B; C, D, E, F, and J.

![Musical notation]

Fig. 17—"From far, from eve and morning," m. 3-11

It is interesting to note the emphasis Vaughan Williams places on "twelve-winded sky" as the melodic line dips to g-natural instead of repeating the g-sharp of measure four (see Fig. 17). Likewise, the phrase "here am I" is given special significance by the leap of a fourth on the last beat of measure ten.
The cadential formula in measures eight through ten serves to connect Section A with Section B. The cadence is quasi-deceptive, tonally oriented, from B, the dominant of e, to a c-sharp major chord (I – V – VI). C-sharp becomes the dominant of f-sharp, the key center of Section B, measures twelve through twenty-one. Section B is accompanied solely by the string quartet in chorale style utilizing a more conventionally conceived harmonic progression in measures twelve through sixteen, a progression initiated by the tonal cadential formula of Section A. This traditional harmonic progression, that is, chords with roots a fifth apart, breaks down at measure seventeen where the chords begin to progress primarily by roots a third apart, a characteristic of modal progression. The root progression of the chords in Section B, measures twelve through twenty-one, are as follows:

Fig. 18--"From far, from eve and morning," m. 12-21
The open texture of the accompaniment is achieved by a predominance of perfect intervals. The basic melodic material is the same as that used in A. However, the interval of a third and the triplet pattern, cyclical element E is exploited in the vocal line, accompaniment, and chord progressions.

The composer punctuates the two commands, "Take my hand" and "Speak now" with sharp block chords from the quartet on the third beats of measures eighteen and nineteen and then broadens the line with the triplet underpinning in measures sixteen, seventeen, nineteen and twenty.

This section utilizes all of stanza two and half of stanza three of the poem, and cadences similar to Section A. The penultimate chord on a progresses to b, up a whole step, and the b becomes the minor dominant of e.

The return of A at measure twenty-two is an interesting manipulation of the harmonic and melodic material. The last seven notes in the vocal line of the first A become the first seven notes of the last A, and the last chord progression of the first A, measures eight through ten, is the first progression of the last A, measures twenty-two through twenty-four.
The accompaniment of the last three measures of the song repeats measures five through seven.

This song is powerful by virtue of its simplicity of form, its conservative melody, and its interesting harmonic progression. By avoiding any complex harmonic or melodic implications Vaughan Williams makes the song easy listening. By moving the chords with just the right mixture of conventional and unconventional progressions he achieves freshness and austerity without being trite and tedious.
CHAPTER V

IS MY TEAM PLOUGHING - A POETIC
AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS

"Is my team ploughing," a dialogue between a dead man
and his living friend, is number twenty-seven of A Shropshire
Lad.

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

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

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

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

'Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?'

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented
Be still, my lad, and sleep.
'Is my friend hearty,  
Now I am thin and pine,  
And has he found to sleep in  
A better bed than mine?'

Yes, lad, I lie easy  
I lie as lads would choose;  
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,  
Never ask me whose.

"Is my team ploughing" deals with a phase of love. Although there is no reference to or implication of a specific time (hour, day, season, etc.), time, as arbitrator, is seen as the primary factor in differentiating between the two men's respective conditions. The dead man has been snatched away from the restrictions imposed by time. The poet does not mention how the two men, one dead and the other living, are able to converse; he merely relates the conversation. However, by setting both persons' words in the same stanza form and with identical versification, iambic tetrameter quatrain, he has implied a homogeneous atmosphere, one in which both men can participate, as it were, face to face. Too, the direct nature of the versification and the terseness of the words disallow a special, hyper-spiritual realm. There is no indication that the dead man has seized the living man's helpless subconsciousness in a dream, or that the

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living man has summoned the dead man through some mystical exercise. The real pathos is felt in the tone of utter helplessness as if the two men are unable to alter their situation, a pathos emphasized by Housman's strict adherence to a uniform formal arrangement. The regularity of the form fixes the men in their separate surroundings, but also provides a special common language apart from either life or death.

The dramatic situation emerging from the structural bonds unfolds in the progression of questions and answers of which the poem consists. The dead man becomes more and more personal as the questions and answers continue. There is no real shock or apprehension upon learning that his horses are still ploughing, even the soil under which he is buried. "No change!" This was to be expected. Likewise, there is someone to take his place as goal keeper in the football game. His "buddies" still play "heart and soul," and the game goes on as well without him. Time has little effect on those common activities of horses and lads; they only recur again and again, the same work and play - things natural to horses and lads.

The third question, however, concerns a real inter-personal involvement in life. "Is my girl happy?" The horses and lads were still engaged in their routines, very little affected by time. But time can change the emotions and relationships of
individuals. "Has she tired of weeping?" he asks, only half expecting her to still be mourning his death.

As if caught up in the rhythm and regularity of his interlocutor's questions, the living friend responds automatically: "Ay, she lies down lightly, She lies not down to weep." But how does this man know such personal things about the dead man's sweetheart? As if by a slip of the tongue, by an automatic reflex, or having been caught up in the habit of answering those harmless questions about horses and lads, he turns his hand, reveals his betrayal and halts abruptly. Realizing what he has said, he quickly admonishes his friend to "Be still... and sleep." Here the poet brings the answer to a close at the end of the third line whereas the previous answers about horses and lads have continued for four lines. The command is terse and abrupt, but still a sympathetic plea, for it is addressed affectionately to "my lad."

The dead man cuts deep in his last question as he asks, in a tone of disgust, "Is my friend hearty, Now I am thin and pine,". The friendship is now broken and he no longer addresses the living man as a friend. "And has he found to sleep in A better bed than mine." Herein he anticipates the answer. He is almost sure that his friend has betrayed him and married his girl. He is sure that he has tricked his living friend into revealing this secret; a secret of life which the dead
may not learn. The poet leaves the impression that the dead cannot see what is taking place in the world of the living, but only by asking questions may he be able to implore or trick the living into revealing their thoughts and activities.

This time the answer comes more direct and yet more evasive. He had been prefacing his answers with "Ay;" the first and second answers were mere confirmation of what the dead man anticipated in his questions. Now the living man answers directly with "Yes, lad, I lie easy." Here Housman makes the first break with the established rhythm emphasizing both "Yes," and "Lad" with strong accents and separation by commas. The living friend is still affectionate with his answer even though the dead man has become hostile. Trying to convince his friend that, were he alive, he would do the same thing, he says "I lie as lads would choose." But he leaves the question only partly answered, for he will say only that he cheers a "dead man's sweetheart," refusing to identify exactly who that dead man is. Imploring him to cease questioning him - "Never ask me whose." - he seeks to soften the blow for the dead friend. Nothing either man could do would make a change in their situations, so, to definitely reveal his marriage, to the dead man's sweetheart, would be both futile and cruel. Housman subtly ends the poem in this last line with an accented syllable at either end of the line, a pattern unique in this poem. Rather than saying the logical
"Don't ever" he begins the last line with "Never;" a more direct and conclusive statement with which to end.

Vaughan Williams has set this poem in a strophic musical form. There are three verses. The first two are musically identical while the last is somewhat different. Each verse is divided into two parts corresponding with the poetic stanzas and are differentiated by accompaniment texture, vocal line, dynamics, tempo, mood, and the use of cyclical elements.

The song begins with a four measure introduction played by the upper three string parts moving in parallel motion. The mode is Dorian on d with a strong emphasis of the Hypodorian - a. Both the introduction and the vocal line of the first half of the verse, measure one through beat three of measure nine, are built on six cyclical elements: B, C, D, E, J, and the d-minor pedal chord, element G which supports the vocal line, measures five through eight. (Cyclical element G is not shown in the example). The rhythmic punctuation of this pedal chord enhances the pensive and mystical atmosphere of the subdued vocal line.
At measure nine the second part of the strophe, poetic stanza two, is introduced by piano and cello accompaniment, measures nine through the first beat of measure eleven which gathers momentum from a piano *animando* to a forte *agitato* in two measures. Two cyclical elements are used: The cello plays a sustained descending chromatic line, cyclical element $K$, while the piano, also utilizing the descending chromatic line (see fig. 24), is primarily concerned with block chords in the triplet rhythmic pattern, cyclical element $E$. As the voice enters on the second beat of measure eleven the piano continues its triplet pattern and the cello combines the

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**Fig. 20**—"Is my team ploughing," m. 1-4 and m. 5-7
descending chromatic line with a variation of element I, so that the line is now much like the first violin part of "On Wenlock Edge," extending from the fourth beat of measure forty through the first beat of measure forty-three, and the cello line of the same song from measure fifty-two through the first beat of measure fifty-five.

![Fig. 21]----"Is my team ploughing," m. 52-55

The voice sings an expansive line with large leaps, measures twelve through fourteen, smoothing to a descending chromatic line in measures fifteen and sixteen. This line is also closely related to the voice part of the first and second stanzas of "On Wenlock Edge" in that both lines are characterized first by leaps and then by descending chromatic scale toward the end. Figure twenty-two is from the fourth beat of measure six through measure ten of "On Wenlock Edge" and measures eleven through fourteen of "Is my team ploughing." Figure twenty-three is from the last one and one-half beats of measure twenty-eight through the first beat of measure thirty-one of "On Wenlock Edge" and measures fifteen through seventeen of "Is my team ploughing."
In measure sixteen the excitement begins to subside as the volume diminishes and the tempo ritards. The accompaniment eases the tension from the descending triplet pattern in measure seventeen, doubled by piano and cello, to the penultimate diminished minor seventh chord on the first one and one-half beats of measure eighteen ($g^\# b$ d f$^\#$), thus allowing the voice to cadence unaccompanied on $g$ in measure nineteen.

The chromatic treatment of the accompaniment defies the designation of a definite tonal or modal center for this second part of the strophe. It is a continuation of the
pattern initiated in measure nine. The harmony progresses through a series of chords which are derived from simultaneous descending chromatic lines, cyclical element K. Beginning in measure nine and continuing through measure eighteen the example (fig. 24) will illustrate the chromatic descent which defines the chords. The large notes are the chromatic descending tones.

![Musical notation](image)

Fig. 24—"Is my team ploughing," m. 9-18

The second verse or strophe, poetic stanzas five and six, are musically identical to the first verse.

The introduction for verse three, measures thirty-seven
and thirty-eight, poetic stanzas seven and eight, is a shortened and more excited version of the previous introductions. The mood becomes extremely agitated as the dead man asks about his friend's personal activities. The musical material is basically the same as the first two verses except that now it is presented in a higher tessitura and with increasing rhythmic diminution to measure fifty where the music is broadened toward the end of the vocal line in measure fifty-four.

The first half of the verse is accompanied by a tremolo pedal chord instead of a sustained chord as in the first two verses, thus heightening the tension. In measure forty the excitement grows as the tonality is moved a third higher from $d$ to $f$ for the second part of the question; "And has he found to sleep in a better bed than mine?" The two measure preparatory phrase to the answer stanza of the previous two strophes, measures nine and ten and measures twenty-seven and twenty-eight, is replaced by a broad syncopated descending figure of only one $2/4$ measure which acts as an anacrusis to the last poetic stanza, cyclical element I.
This half of the last verse is characterized by the long descending chromatic vocal line punctuated by a variation of the anacrusis figure, cyclical element $\downarrow\downarrow$, both ascending and descending.

Fig. 25--"Is my team ploughing," m. 9-10

Fig. 26--"Is my team ploughing," m. 27-28
The harmonic background is similar to the second half of the two previous strophes in that the chords are derived from the descending chromatics. The verse climaxes on the words "dead man's sweetheart," measures fifty and fifty-one, followed by a reiteration of this verse's introduction, but in the original tempo and marked subito pesante, measures fifty-one through fifty-three. The final words are left unaccompanied except for the lingering g from the piano in measure fifty-three.

A postlude ensues at measure fifty-five recalling the initial introduction with an additional three measures, fifty-five through fifty-seven, to allow a transition from the sinister sound of the last verse to the mysterious sound of the introductory material.

It is very possible that Vaughan Williams has missed the true meaning of the poetry in this particular song. As expressed in the poetic analysis the atmosphere of both question and answer seems to be homogeneous. Ernest Newman, a London critic, has stated that in setting this poem to music "the problem of it is to differentiate the man who speaks from the realm of the dead and his living friend ... and at the same time to keep the speakers in the same atmosphere."3 While the dead man speaks in a mysterious, subdued

mood, the living man's answer is couched in an entirely different musical texture and atmosphere. "Dr. Vaughan Williams makes the living man go into a semi-hysterical fit at his reply: 'Ay, the horses trample, etc.'"4

It is also interesting to note that Vaughan Williams did not set stanzas three and four of the poem. Housman was very indignant concerning Vaughan Williams' liberties and "did not like such 'mutilations,' such 'pranks,' as he called them. 'I wonder how he would like me to cut two bars out of his music,' he said."5 Grant Richards reports that "a friend asked Dr. Vaughan Williams what he thought" of Housman's attitude.

"His reply was to the point: . . . 'the composer has a perfect right artistically to set any portion of a poem he chooses provided he does not actually alter the sense: . . . I also feel that a poet should be grateful to anyone who fails to perpetuate such lines as:

The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.'"6

In a sense this incision through the middle of the poem serves Vaughan Williams well because without new musical material an added verse would require another repetition of the same music or another variation. Repetition would have a dulling effect while another variation would destroy the

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4Ibid.


sense of climax in the final verse. However, this "mutilation" as Housman called it, does do injury to the sense of the poetry. It forces the dead man to ask about his girl immediately after he learns that his horses are doing quite well; not a very tender progression of thought. "It destroys the poet's effect of the gradual, almost casual, transition from the ghost's questions about the common things of life to the questions about his sweetheart,"7 and interrupts the poetic rhythmical "trap" set in motion by the first two questions.

The aesthetic effect of the last verse is that of great conflict between the two men, an effect not altogether in harmony with the poetry. Rather than the living friend trying to spare both himself and his dead friend the pain caused by their unalterable conditions, Vaughan Williams makes the living man appear possessed by revenge and hatred, almost sneering at his dead friend. "What is the use of the poet softening the final blow as he does if Dr. Vaughan Williams is to deal it afresh at the dead man with a sledge hammer?"8

On the other hand, there is merit in the development of the music itself; merit not easily elucidated by analysis,

8 Ibid.
but obvious only upon hearing the song. There is a sense of formal correctness and electrifying momentum even though it may not seem entirely appropriate for the poetry.
CHAPTER VI

OH WHEN I WAS IN LOVE WITH YOU -
A POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS

Poem eighteen of A Shropshire Lad, "Oh, when I was in love with you," is the fourth song of Vaughan Williams' cycle.

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

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

The subject matter, like "Is my team ploughing," concerns love, but this is love that is fresh and lively, albeit transient and uncomplicated. The poem combines naivete with maturity. What the speaker in the poem says is profound, but he does not recognize his own insight. The lad is old enough to perceive that others noticed his change of behavior while he was "in love;" but his love was so shallow and immature that he called it a "fancy." While he was "in love" he had made an effort to be "clean and brave," but now "why bother" is his attitude.

The ballad measures - "iambic, first and third lines

1Housman, A Shropshire Lad, p. 21.
tetrameter, second and fourth lines trimeter with an end rhyme scheme of abab - a very ordinary and straightforward metrical plan, supports the lad's unconcerned, but not dis-honest nature. The reader is made keenly aware of the speaker's self-centered attitude by the way the poet has set the pronoun "I" in the most strategic positions. For instance, the poet could just as well have had the fourth line read, "How well I dud behave," The sense would have been the same, but the "I" would lose the prominent position it otherwise occupies in "How well did I behave." Here the accent falls on the word "I" rather than on "did." Only once is the word "you" used. "You" is encountered only briefly in the poem as if to signify the lad's brief and inconsequential affair with the girl - fascinating for a while, but soon forgotten when "I" comes into the picture.

In the first line of stanza two the words "fancy passes" serve to ritard the steady rhythm set in motion by the first stanza. This is the first time two multisyllabic words have been used in succession, a factor, which in conjunction with the sibilants in the words themselves, ritards the movement and switches the phrase into a "sing-song" like glide to allow the lad time for a passing reflection. By starting the first three lines of the second stanza with "And" the poet imparts an air of light-hearted excitement to the lad as he seems to "run on" about "this and that" but nothing in

\[\text{2Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, p. 566.}\]
particular; things are back to normal now and he is free to do as he pleases. Lines seven and eight return to the original lilt of the ballad measure as if to say "I could care less" about what "they'll be saying for miles around."

Vaughan Williams writes a simple folk-song-like verse for this poem. It consists of four, four measure phrases in the pattern A B C B' with a two measure instrumental interlude between phrases B and C and a six measure codetta. The first two phrases form a contrasting period while C functions as a diversion phrase before the occurrence of B'. The natural minor, or Aeolian mode prevails throughout most of the song. However, the somewhat somber scale does not interfere with the carefree nature of the music.

Phrase A, vocal line one-half beats of measure four, is characterized by the leap of a fourth, cyclical element F; the repeated note pattern, cyclical element K; and, the inverted arch, cyclical element C.

![Musical notation](image)

Fig. 27—"Oh, When I was in love with you." m. 1-4

The square, unsophisticated 2/4 rhythm divided equally into eighth notes makes for crispness and folk-like abandonment, qualities also supported by the block, pizzicato triadic
chords in the strings. There is a sense of continuity and propulsion from the piano arpeggios which spell the chords, the roots of which also form the inverted arch, cyclical element $C$ in the sequence, $d$ $c$ $b$ $c$ $d$.

Phrase B is similar to phrase A in that the accompaniment figures are similar except that the block chords in the strings occur on every beat instead of on the down beats only and the piano arpeggios are more numerous and overlap one another. The vocal line soars higher than before and the leaps are predominantly thirds instead of fourths. The harmony moves downward by step from $d$ in measure five to $a$ in measure seven.

At measure eight, the point of cadence for phrase B, the harmonic sequence seems to call for a cadence on $d$-minor. However, Vaughan Williams introduces an $f$-sharp minor chord, thus delaying the cadence in favor of the interlude from the last half of beat two in measure eight through the first half of beat two in measure ten. The cadence on $d$ comes in measure ten after the first violin solo in the interlude which imitates the bouncing figure of measures seven and eight of the vocal line.

\[\text{Fig. 23--"Oh, when I was in love with you," m. 8-10}\]
The interlude ends on a d-major arpeggiated cadence instead of the expected d-minor.

The f-sharp in the cadence is subsequently used in phrase C to impart a fresh, new sound to the vocal line. Vaughan Williams works in this new harmonic idea with the rest of the musical factors to portray the lad's change of attitude toward his love affair. The vocal line flows with more conjunct motion than before, imparting a more nonchalant character than the two preceding phrases, A and B, or the following phrase, B'. Leaps are avoided, and, though ornamented by a few turns, in measures eleven, twelve, and thirteen, the line descends by step from f-sharp to b-flat.

The accompaniment, primarily a series of ninth chords, descends stepwise over the distance of a major tenth from d on the first beat of measure eleven to b-flat, measure fourteen. It is interesting to note the ambiguous effect of the accompaniment. The upper two string parts and the right hand of the piano part play the basic triad of each chord while the lower two string parts and the left hand of the piano part play the seventh and ninth tones of the chord. The descending whole step progression allows the seventh and ninth tones of the chords to form the root and third of the following chord, and so a type of overlapping is heard. The example shows only the piano part since the strings merely double the piano.
This pattern continues to measure thirteen where the descending triads persist, but now over an e-major triad pedal. The effect is to allow the descent and forward motion to continue, but at the same time to introduce a static quality to the harmony in agreement with the ritarding vocal line.

The b-flat chord in measure fourteen on which this phrase ends becomes the dominant of the e-flat chord on the first beat of measure fifteen which imitates phrase $B'$. The g-flat in the e-flat chord on the first beat of measure fifteen is the enharmonic equivalent of f-sharp in the following d-major chord; a factor which relates phrases C and $B'$ and gives contrast to B and $B'$ which are otherwise identical.

The six measure Codetta, measures nineteen through twenty-four, is an expanded version of the interlude with both the first violin and viola playing solo imitations of the last figure in the vocal line (see fig. 28). Finishing the song on d-major rather than d-minor keeps the mood fresh.

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Fig. 29—"Oh, when I was in love with you," m. 11-13
and vigorous to the very end.

Vaughan Williams has written his music quite appropriately for this particular poem. The regular rhythm of the poetry is of course no small factor in the success of the song, but the composer has certainly applied fresh and vigorous music to the words. The accompaniment aids the singer rather than competing with him, and the subtle use of the f-sharp and parallel harmonic movement provides vivid contrast, not easily achieved in a song so short.
CHAPTER VII

BREDON HILL - A POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS

"Bredon Hill," number twenty-one of A Shropshire Lad is one of the Housman Poems most popular with composers and editors of anthologies. It has been set by at least seven composers who have had their works published before October 1943.¹ It tells of a lad's love; his attitude toward the traditions of his people; and his encounter with death.

In summertime on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them
In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

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

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

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

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

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

The bells they sound on Bredon,
And still the steeple hum,
"Come all to church, good people."
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
I hear you, I will come.2

The lad has been successful in love even to the point of separating his girl from her own past traditions. From his lofty perch on Bredon he could look out on the rest of the people as they went about their "hum-drums" way of life, allowing their lives to be controlled by such things as ringing bells; bells for which, the lad, in the past has had no use except to enjoy their sound. He felt he could shun the bells, he could remain aloof and above all this "church-going" and daily routine. He had no use for the established tradition except for that part which would serve him best. But he soon learned that the bells for which he had little use, actually represented the realities

of life which would bring him low; which would work for him humiliation to make him cry out against the very things which he thought could not affect him. The bells which at one time were little more than "happy noises" were the very bells which heralded his submission to the forces of time and fate. The bells' tone was the same but the sound in his ears, so different.

At first the tone of the poem seems quite happy and carefree, for the first stanza is written in the present tense. But when the word "would" appears in the second stanza, the first stanza is revealed as a reflection, almost as if the speaker had been in a state of self-hypnosis in his reverie. Yet, at this point in the poem there is nothing to indicate the pathos to come; only a slight restlessness conveyed by the seeming added fifth line suggests that something might be amiss. Norman Marlow of the University of Manchester, comments on the significance of the fifth line.

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

The reader is startled when the lad reveals in the second stanza his aloof and even rebellious attitude toward tradition. His truancy from church on Sunday morning is careless enough, but to spend that morning in the company of his sweetheart and reveling in the sights and sounds of nature is not the traditional pattern of life. Housman achieves a keenly sensitive mixture of emotions in this stanza as he desensitizes the poignancy of the lines, "Here of a Sunday morning My love and I would lie," with the picturesque and pleasant sound in "And see the colored counties And hear the larks so high." And yet, the imagery is such that the reader becomes aware of the lad's own self-deception and rationalization which subsequently contributes to his unhappy destiny. The fifth line, "About us in the sky," transmits a certain sinister tone. The larks, which seemed so friendly at one time, were actually portents of events which eventually would devastate him. Now he recalls those larks "About us in the sky" with a sense of despairing that he did not understand their significance.

In stanza three the bells are exposed as possessing their own motivating power for they ring of their own accord.

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Previously they had been simply a "happy noise," but soon the lad comes to recognize them as a vital and compelling force. Still he was not greatly troubled when they called the "good people" to "come and pray" because his "love would stay" with him. He still had control of the situation. In fact he was impertinent enough to tell them just when he would and when he would not heed their chime: "Oh, peal upon our wedding, And we will hear the chime." He certainly was not in the habit of listening very intently for he had to "turn" to "answer." Again the fifth line of both stanzas, three and four, communicate the lad's despondency at being the cause of his sweetheart's unfaithfulness to her religious activities and at his own impudence with the forces which he could not control, forces typified by the bells.

In stanza five the lad's real tragedy is revealed. There came a time, when the snows had covered his springtime, that he could no longer influence his sweetheart to disregard the bells. The words Housman selects to depict her death are indeed both beautiful and pathetic. The phrase, "My love rose up so early/And stole out unbeknown," portrays so vividly the suddenness and loneliness of death more tragic to the living person than to the dying. Here the fifth line accentuates the speaker's apparent amazement or disbelief that this tragedy was actually happening to him. By avoiding any punctuation to interrupt the continuous flow of words in the last
three lines of stanza five the poet exposes the uncontrolled rush of emotion in the lad's mind and heart whenever he thinks about the past.

In stanza six the details of her funeral are told. Only one bell was used then for there was no use exhorting the girl any longer. Still there was the bell, symbolic of life's continuity unaffected by one person's death; symbolic of an unrelenting force, like the gale in "On Wenlock Edge," ever present though not malicious. What should have been the place of their wedding was instead the place for her funeral. The church and the bells which were to be the place and symbol of his happiness were instead the place and symbol of his personal defeat. In line five of this stanza the lad, almost unwittingly lays bare his own true nature and the significance of death. He says almost sheepishly, "And would not wait for me." Death is separation in the truest sense of the word, and the lad reacts to this separation by feeling sorry for himself, almost angry with his sweetheart for going somewhere without him, even to death.

Housman imparts a sense of timelessness to the bells in the last stanza. They are still ringing and calling the people to church, and to the lad it seems that they will never stop. Indeed, he feels that they have been ringing forever. So in a state of frustration and emotional exhaustion he cries out to the bells imploring them to "be dumb" and he will heed their
insistent tolling. Yet his true character is made very plain. He has not really changed. In his own eyes he is still the center of the world. He still wants to control, and even if he has to condescend and "come to church," he will do so only because the noise reminds him of his recent loss, not even suspecting that the bells will continue to ring into eternity. After all his tragedy he has learned that the forces represented by the bells are greater than he. He will submit only on the condition that the bells will stop ringing.

Vaughan Williams' "Bredon Hill" is the most complicated song of the entire cycle. Even though the basic material can be traced back to the essential cyclical elements, the composer has manipulated these elements to create an expansive, highly contrasted sectional form. As if to turn his back on the near perfect unity of "Oh, when I was in love with you," the composer offers "Bredon Hill" in several sections, sections which are hardly continuous one with the other, although each is built on the same basic musical material. The formal arrangement is presented in the following table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure numbers</th>
<th>Subdivision and Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro.</td>
<td>1 - 1 1/2 beats of 24</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1/2 beat before 24 - 4 1/2 beats of 35</td>
<td>Poetic stanza one, music A Instrumental interlude Poetic stanza two, music A Instrumental codetta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>52 - 78</td>
<td>Poetic stanzas three and four, music B Instrumental codetta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79 - 83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>84 - 91</td>
<td>Instrumental introduction Poetic stanza five, music C Poetic stanza six, music C Instrumental codetta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>92 - 36 beats of 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100 - 110</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>111 - 113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>3 beats before 115 - 1 1/2 beats of 117</td>
<td>Instrumental introduction, music free Poetic stanza seven, lines one and two, music A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>117 - 121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 beat before 122 - 122</td>
<td>Instrumental interlude, music B Poetic stanza seven, line three, music A Poetic stanza seven, line four and five, music B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>123 - 126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>127 - 135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postlude</td>
<td>136 - 146</td>
<td>Instrumental and vocal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The introduction is primarily a series of parallel seventh chords. The strings play one series of seventh chords suspended over another series in the piano with each series built on different roots (i.e.; measures one and two, strings - egbd, piano - aceg), so that the total harmonic effect is that of a complete tenth chord (acegbd). The texture is very thick, and yet there is a shimmering quality about it because of the open spacing of the chord tones in the strings. Since the chords in the piano part almost always move contrary to the chords in the strings, the separate sets of parallel seventh chords retain their autonomy and may be distinguished individually, a characteristic supported by the rhythmic punctuation.

After the first four measures of static harmony with minimum rhythmic interest, the music begins to move with a dotted rhythm, cyclical element D, in the string parts. At measure nine the parallel chords in the piano part move upward by step from a to d over which the strings play two, three measure phrases of parallel second inversion triads built on cyclical elements A, C, and E. This passage imitates the rhythm of measure four of "Is my team ploughing," and the melody line of the string accompaniment from "From far, from eve and morning," measures twelve through fourteen. The example is from the first violin part only.
This is a general feature of Vaughan Williams' style. At measure twenty-one the alternating figure is heard simultaneously in both hands of the piano part, moving in contrary motion, and giving the effect of many bells clanging.

\footnote{Examples of this stylistic trait may also be found in \textit{Songs of Travel}: Part I, "The Vagabond" and "The Roadside Fire;" Part II, "Youth and Love" and "In Dreams;" Boosey and Hawkes, (London, 1905 and 1907).}
while the strings and the piano sustain the tenth chord pedal built on $a$. As the alternating figure subsides the pedal chord continues and subsequently forms the accompaniment for the first three measures of the vocal line.

The flowing vocal line beginning on the last half of the second beat of measure twenty-four is similar to the beginning of the vocal line of "Is my team ploughing," in that the melodic curve of the two lines are similar with the second peak occurring a step higher than the first, and both lines having similar shapes. It is impossible to conclude whether the composer planned this similarity.

Fig. 32--"Bredon Hill," m. 24-28; "Is my team ploughing," m. 5-7

The line centers around $g$, over $a$ in the accompaniment, moving temporarily to the subdominant of $g$ at measure thirty, over $d$ in the accompaniment, and returning to $g$ at measure thirty-three. The lowered seventh tone, $f$-natural is also featured. The line is built on cyclical elements $A$, $B$, $C$, $D$, $E$, and $F$. 
Vaughan Williams gives special emphasis to the words "ring" and "happy" with melismatic figures built on cyclical element C (see fig. 33) which also recalls specifically the string parts of measures twelve through fourteen of the introduction. The entire line is accompanied by the full ensemble playing sustained chords. These chords imitate the piano part in measures nine through twelve, and are repeated, without the $b$-minor seventh chord of measure nine, in augmented time values. The example compares the chord progression of measures nine through twelve with the chord progression supporting the vocal line, measures twenty-four through thirty-four.
A four measure interlude separating the first two stanzas ensues at measure thirty-five. The material for the interlude and the accompaniment for the second poetic stanza is derived from a combination of the rhythm of measures five through eight and the harmony of measures nine through twelve. The difference between the music for poetic stanzas one and two is determined by the rhythmic treatment of the accompaniment, because the harmony is basically the same and the vocal lines are identical. The rhythm in the string parts is based on cyclical element D.

Fig. 34--"Bredon Hill," m. 9-12 and m. 24-34
The piano part alternates, cyclical element $H$, between $a$ and $c$ in measures thirty-nine through forty-two and $a$ and $d$ in measures forty-three through forty-six. A four measure codetta identical to measures five through eight closes Section $A$, poetic stanzas one and two.

Section $B$ is accompanied by piano alone and is comprised of poetic stanzas three and four. The vocal line is similar to Section $A$, but the accompaniment becomes much more prominent than before. The melody determines the key center as $d$, sometimes using the natural minor scale and sometimes the major mode while the accompaniment is composed of parallel chords featuring open fourths, fifths, and octaves, in the right hand of the piano part, over pedal chords in the left hand.

The parallel chord movement in the right hand of the piano part is a combination of cyclical elements $A$, $E$, and $F$, directly imitating the first two and one-half measures of "On Wenlock Edge," and measures nine through eleven of the introduction. This example is taken from measure fifty-two.

![Image](https://example.com/image35.png)

**Fig. 35--"Bredon Hill," m. 52**

The alternating figure cyclical element $H$, first appearing in measure sixty-one, is also used.
The left hand plays a c-minor seventh chord, arriving at this chord from the d-minor seventh chord in measure fifty-one of the previous codetta, the same progression first introduced in measures eleven and twelve of the Introduction. The succeeding progressions in the left hand from measures fifty-two through eighty-three progress by roots a second or a third apart except for the final two chords which are an augmented fourth apart. This factor combined with an alternation between f-sharp and f-natural and e-natural and e-flat emphasizes the modal characteristics of the harmony.
vocal line centering around d, the total harmonic effect is that of the superimposition of one sonority over another, much like the Introduction.

The entire vocal line is built on cyclical elements A, B, D, E, F, H, and J. The example shows one-half beat before measure fifty-four through the first beat of measure sixty-three.

The Introduction of the f-sharp in measure sixty-four and the c-sharp in measure seventy-one causes the vocal line to take on a fresh and light quality, a quality which, at first glance, seems necessary to support the mood of the words. However, when the words are considered in the pathetic context of the whole poem, the bright key center seems inappropriate. In fact, section B is much less somber than section A. The tempo is quite free, changing from animato to molto tranquillo. Also, the vocal line itself is much more pretentious than in the previous section, when the impending tragedy of the poem seems to call for an even more
subdued line. At measure sixty-six Vaughan Williams runs poetic stanzas three and four together. The sense of the poetry and the dramatic quality of the lingering fifth line of each stanza seems to call for a definite pause at this point. However, he delays the pauses to the last three lines of stanza four, the three lines which form a single, continuous poetic phrase.

On the other hand, the composer does achieve a fine representation of the sound of many bells. The insistent triplet movement and the overlapping sonorities closely resemble the multi-overtone clamor of many bells reverberating again and again.

A five measure codetta closes this section repeating almost exactly measures twenty through twenty-three of the Introduction, differing only in that this codetta is extended two measures and the pedal chord in the right hand of the piano part plays a g-major chord instead of an e-minor seventh chord as in the Introduction. This codetta, coupled with measures twenty through twenty-three, has the effect of bracketing sections A and B, setting them apart from what is to follow. This factor is certainly in harmony with the poetic mood, for the first four stanzas of poetry give the introductory material telling of the lad's attitudes before the poet relates the central action in stanzas five and six.
The upper three string parts, playing every mysterious sustained and open sound on g and d; and the piano, playing solitary major thirds, first detached in measures eighty-five and eighty-seven, then in a motivic pattern in measures eighty-eight and ninety, join to introduce Section C. This section is an outstanding example of economy of means. Built on the Phrygian mode from g, the vocal line repeats variations of the three cyclical elements C, D, and J in the first phrase, measures ninety-two and ninety-three. The line is exclusively in conjunct motion, rising a third and returning to the original pitch, then descending a third and returning; a characteristic which links this section with "Is my team ploughing" more than any other section of this song.4

Fig. 39-"Bredon Hill," m. 92-93

Measures ninety-nine and one hundred display a curious change of meter (a hemiola-like interpolation) which has the effect of connecting lines four and five of poetic stanza five into one long line; but more significantly, an effective use of accidentals is used to emphasize the word "unbeknown."

4Compare measures five and seven of "Is my team ploughing" with any part of the vocal line of this section of "Bredon Hill."
The accompaniment in this section accumulates musical material until cyclical elements \( H \) and \( F \), in addition to the other three elements used in the vocal part (see fig. 39), are involved at one time from measure 105 through the second beat of measure 111. To further describe how this accumulation works to build toward a climax in measure 109, the entire \( C \) section is divided into four subsections according to accompanimental texture.

### TABLE II

**DIVISION OF SECTION C ACCORDING TO ACCOMPANIMENTAL TEXTURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Measure numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>84 - 2 beats of 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>2 beats before 97 - 1 ( \frac{1}{2} ) beats of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>100 - 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>105 - 110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Subsection one (note that this includes the introduction to Section \( C \) because the first two poetic lines of stanza five
are accompanied by the material from this introduction) the accompaniment functions as a pedal, cyclical element G, with an occasional sound from the piano in measure ninety-four through the second beat of measure ninety-six. The second subsection uses only string quartet accompaniment moving with parallel triads in parallel motion with the vocal line. Subsection Three features the top two strings and piano sounding g on the fourth beat of each measure, signifying the lone bell tolling the news of the funeral. This is combined with the alternating open chords in the right hand of the piano part and seventh chords, uninverted and in closed position, in the left hand, played on the second beat of the measure; accompaniment characteristics which relate Section C with Section B (see measures sixty-one through sixty-three). At measure 105 the fourth subsection begins with a heavier texture because of the addition of the stepwise arch which moves in ostinato fashion in the viola and cello parts throughout this subsection.

Section C achieves a dramatic mood and forceful musical direction. Vaughan Williams uses a minimum of resource material, but builds to a satisfying climax through the accumulation device much like some of Wagner's music except on a smaller scale (i.e., Prelude to Tristan and Isolde).

A large Coda, poetic stanza seven, begins at measure 114 with a four measure instrumental introduction. The instrumental introduction beginning on the second beat of measure
114 is a series of a-minor seventh arpeggios under a g - d pedal in the strings. This pattern continues to form the accompaniment of the first two poetic lines of stanza seven. The melodic material centering around g from the last half of the last beat of measure 116 through measure 121 is exactly like the first vocal phrase of the song from the last half of the last beat of measure twenty-four through the first half of the first beat of measure twenty-eight. In measure 121 the tempo quickens and Section B is recalled in a one and one-half measure interlude. The piano plays the characteristic right hand parallel open chord pattern of Section B while the left hand plays a tremolo a-minor seventh pedal. Poetic line three repeats the vocal line of measures twenty-eight through thirty while the accompaniment moves to a d-minor seventh pedal with an eight note staccato pattern in the upper two strings and the right hand of the piano part. This staccato figure uses the interval of a fourth both melodically and harmonically, cyclical element F and is an imitation of the opening motive of "Oh, when I was in love with you."

Fig. 11--"Bredon Hill," m. 123
With the lively pace already initiated, the music progresses to the next part of the Coda, poetic lines four and five. The transition into this section is quite abrupt. The $d$-minor seventh sonority in measure 126 moves to an $e$-flat major seventh chord in measure 127 which supports a sixteenth note alternating pattern in the right hand of the piano part, cyclical elements $F$ and $H$. This total effect imitates measures twenty through twenty-three of the Introduction.

![Fig. 42--"Bredon Hill," m. 127](image)

A triplet descending passage played every three beats by the second violin, viola, and left hand of the piano part punctuates this otherwise static sequential pattern.

![Fig. 43--"Bredon Hill," m. 128](image)

All this together makes the sound of many bells ringing in an almost frenzied manner over which the vocal line calls out, "Oh, noisy bells, be dumb, I hear you, I will come," using melodic material from section B. The voice is
instructed to sing "quite freely - irrespective of the accompaniment."

The Coda dies away with a series of alternating fourths in the right hand of the piano part, measure 135, and a Postlude from measure 136 through measure 145 ends the song. This Postlude is an exact recapitulation of measures seven through fourteen and the first chord of measure fifteen. The voice echoes the final three words of the poem in a solemn repeated note statement, "I will come."

There is much to be said in favor of this song. Vaughan Williams has done much to make the imagery of the bells stand out very vividly. The vocal line is certainly pleasant and singable, especially in section A; and in section C there is a genuine sense of pathos for the singer to grasp. Each section is a tightly knit musical unit and each has a fine sense of climax within itself. The string parts are quite colorful, imparting both brilliance and mystery to the total effect.

However, the effect of the piece as a single unit is not convincing. The breaks between the sections and the individuality of each section tend to cause the overall sense of form to be lost. Each section is so contrasted in texture and rhythm that little sense of unity is felt when the song is heard for the first or second time. This is true even though there is certainly a uniformity of basic musical material. Also, the poetry seems to call for the emphasis of
the young man's inner conflict rather than centering the attention on the bells. The constant clamor of the bells, many different kinds of bells, forces the young man's disquiet and self-deception to take a subordinate position.
"In valleys of springs of rivers," number fifty of A Shropshire Lad, deals with the matter of death as seen through the eyes of an older man. It is a view of "the mortal tragedy relieved by lines describing the beauties of nature, a motive which . . . though turned into sadness, is in fact calculated to make us happy."¹ Housman writes a four line preface to the poem revealing the names of four rural villages² along the small Clun River.

Clunton and Clunbury
Clungunford and Clun,
Are the quietest place
Under the sun.³

It is with these places, or this place, in mind that the speaker recalls his past and later considers his place in the future.

¹Trevelyan, A Layman's Love of Letters, p. 47.
²That these names represent four different villages is supposition. Only Clun is definitely marked in modern atlases as the name of a river and town. Since the word "place" is singular it might be that Clunton, Clunbury, Clungunford and Clun are different names for the same place. According to the Columbia-Lippincott Gazetteer of the World, edited by Leon E. Seltzer, (New York, 1952), p. 422, Clun is a town and parish southwest of Shropshire on the small Clun River and fourteen miles from Ludlow.
³Housman, A Shropshire Lad, p. 51-52.
In valleys of springs of rivers,  
By Ony and Teme and Clun,  
The country for easy livers,  
The quietest under the sun.

We still had sorrows to lighten,  
One could not be always glad,  
And lads knew trouble at Knighton  
When I was a Knighton lad.

By bridges that Thames runs under  
In London, the town built ill,  
'Tis sure small matter for wonder  
If sorrow is with one still.

And if as a lad grows older  
The troubles he bears are more,  
He carries his griefs on a shoulder  
That handseled them long before.

Where shall one halt to deliver  
This luggage 's lief set down?  
Not Thames, not Teme is the river,  
Nor London nor Knighton the town:

'Tis a long way further than Knighton,  
A quieter place than Clun,  
Where doomsday may thunder and lighten  
And little 'twill matter to one.4

The rivers in this poem represent the continuous flow  
of mankind through life, beginning quietly in the natural  
and protective surroundings of nature, like the spring of  
a great river. The cities, Knighton and London, represent  
the problems of man, small like Knighton in youth, but  
great like London in maturity.

There is a mystical atmosphere about the poem even though  
many geographical places and physical things are mentioned.  
The language is more vague and indirect and the metrical  
configuration less strict than in the other five poems.

4 Ibid.
These factors, combined with the increasing prevalence of somber thoughts in each succeeding stanza, gradually change the objective image of "valleys of springs of rivers" to the highly subjective thought that "little 'twill matter to one."

The poem may be divided into three sections with two stanzas in each section. The first section, stanzas one and two, deals with the past. The first stanza describes the peaceful valleys where the heads of the Ony, Teme, and Clun Rivers bubble fresh from the ground. The imagery is refreshing, for only in quiet places, undisturbed by the activities of much humanity, do clear springs flow with enough water to supply a river of any size. It was to these peaceful valleys that the speaker had turned when, as a lad, he had met trouble in Knighton. The second stanza, to continue the thought, states that even in the country valleys there were "sorrows to lighten" because of the day-to-day struggle.

Much emphasis is placed on the vocal consonants "m" and "n" in these first two stanzas. Whether or not it was intended by the poet, there is a certain refreshing sound in the words, "Ony," "Teme," "Clun," "springs," and "under" which vivifies the imagery of the Welsh mountain side.

In stanzas three and four the speaker is concerned with

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Knighton is a town on the Teme River, east of Radnor, fourteen miles west of Ludlow. Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer, p. 961.
the present. London, with all its problems of crowded conditions and fast, busy pace of life, is now his home; a city built, not for pleasure, but out of necessity. "London," typifying his many sorrows, offers little consolation to him; small wonder that his sorrow is still with him. Likewise, the Thames, much greater than Ony, Teme or Clun will ever be, represents the multitude of people which are continually crossing his path, offering a great deal of social conflict and more serious problems.

In stanza four the speaker becomes more philosophical about his troubles. He has grown accustomed to his problems and has learned how to best relieve his "shoulders" of his troubles, and he reasons that as he grows older he becomes a part of an even larger human community. Long before his time other men have been weighted down under similar problems, and they have lived and even succeeded in spite of the load. In this sense the "shoulder" would refer to a type of "strength in numbers" attitude. The speaker finds comfort momentarily in the realization that others who have lived before and are living in his own time are beset by similar troubles.

The speaker turns to the future in stanzas five and six. Immediately he asks a direct question, the force of which is implemented by shifting the accent to the first word of the line: "Where shall one halt to deliver . . .?" Heretofore
every line has begun on an unaccented syllable. Therefore the question is made more forceful by contrast. His question concerns his ultimate destination. Herein the matter of death and the hereafter is revealed as the subject which haunts the speaker's mind throughout the poem. Even a quiet place like Clun or a remote village like Knighton does not compare with the seclusion of "Where doomsday may lighten and thunder And little 'twill matter to one."

Throughout the poem Housman has emphasized the liquid vowel sounds and vocal consonants (i.e; long - ʌ, further - ʌ and ɛ, Clun - ʌ, doomsday - ʌʌ, livers - ʌ, Teme - m, runs - n, etc.)\(^6\) Therefore the verbal effect is to read or speak the poem slowly, allowing the words to flow freely and even melt together, certainly a factor attractive to the composer in search of a lyric which would inspire a smooth and flowing line. Lines such as "Where shall one halt to deliver/This luggage I'd lief set down," with so many "l" and aspirant sounds offer a composer words which connect easily with one another. The verbal sound is not clipped and choppy, but continuous. The lilt of the poetic rhythm is also conducive to a flowing musical line. All the lines are composed of three feet and most of them fall into the following pattern:

\[\text{−\text{an iamb followed by an anapest followed}}\]

\(^6\text{Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. vii.}\)
by another iamb with a feminine ending. Each stanza is marked very definitely by a masculine ending on the last line.

These specific points of versification are utilized by Vaughan Williams in what is the most lyrical of all the six songs; a song which he entitles simply "Clun." The formal outline of "Clun" is given in the following table.

TABLE III

FORMAL OUTLINE OF THE SONG "CLUN"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1 - beat 2 of 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A, verse one, poetic stanzas</td>
<td>4 - beat 2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one and two</td>
<td>2 beats before 21 - beat 2 of 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude - same as Intro.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A, verse two, poetic stanzas</td>
<td>24 - beat 2 of 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three and four</td>
<td>41 - 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B, verse three, poetic stanza</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda, verse four, poetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stanza 6</td>
<td>56 - 76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The short introduction centers on a. It begins with a descending three note motive that has no particular reference to a previous song until measure three where the rhythm from

7 There is some overlapping of the sections because before one section has reached its final cadence the next section has already begun.
measure four of "Is my team ploughing," and measure nine through the second beat of measure ten of "Bredon Hill," is imitated.

![Fig. 44--"Clun" m. 2-4](image)

The descending line, played by all the strings, descends over block chords in the piano which alternate between an \( f\text{-sharp} \) diminished chord and a \( d\text{-major} \) chord, cyclical element \( H \), arriving in the Phrygian mode on \( e \) at measure four. The Phrygian mode thus defines the harmonic background of the first few measures of Section A.

Section A is divided into four parts delineated by four different key centers: Phrygian mode on \( e \), \( a\text{-flat} \), \( f\text{-sharp} \), and \( a \). Part one, Phrygian mode on \( e \), is characterized by the most flowing vocal line of the whole song; a line, the first phrase of which is a long sweeping arch, cyclical element \( B \), beginning on the second beat of measure five and continuing through measure eleven. The example shows the line through the first half of the second beat measure nine because this is where the arch is completed.
This line is supported by the piano alone playing ascending arpeggios. At measure twelve the key center shifts suddenly to a-flat major for part two. This unprepared modulation is made less abrupt by the continuing arpeggio figure in the accompaniment; by the softening of the dynamics to pianissimo; by the gliding effect of the voice in triplet pattern; and by the fact that f in the vocal line is a common tone of both key centers, Phrygian on e and a-flat major. The change in texture as the string quartet enters on an a-flat major chord affords both extra support for the new key and a fresh accompanimental color. The total effect of the change to the major key and the full bodied sound of the complete quintet points up the words "quietest under the sun." In measure twelve Vaughan Williams makes use of cyclical element A i. in the vocal line which is subsequently echoed by the violins in measure thirteen.
An enharmonic change of e-flat to d-sharp takes place in the first half of measure sixteen so that the new key of part three, f-sharp, is approached through d-sharp, an enharmonic common tone of both f-sharp and a-flat. Again the transition is made smooth as the piano arpeggios provide rhythmic continuity through the abrupt key changes. The echo by the violins (see fig. 46) is reiterated in measure seventeen. To accomplish the change of key to a minor, part four, the composer chromatically changes f-sharp and a-sharp to naturals, and e becomes the fifth scale step of a-minor in measure twenty. With the sharps removed from f and a, and with b, common tone of both f-sharp major and a-minor sounding in the piano and cello, the descending line from e to a in the voice is very acceptable.
The return to a in measure twenty-one serves to round out Section A by returning to the original key center in preparation for the repeat of A. The short interlude is identical to the introduction, and A, stanza two, is an exact repetition of A, stanza one.

Section B is primarily a development of the introductory material. The vocal line shows little melodic interest as it is mostly recitative-like and built on the repeated note pattern, cyclical element J. The accompaniment, however, develops the stepwise descending motive from the introduction and the alternating figure cyclical element H. After beginning in a minor the key center changes to a-flat in measure forty-three, approached by chromatic alteration of a and e to a-flat and e-flat. A-flat moves to b, two beats before forty-seven, through the pivotal tone, b-flat, which subsequently becomes its enharmonic equivalent, a-sharp. From that point the accompaniment is a matter of descending chromatic lines in the viola and cello, cyclical element K over alternating pedal chords of b major and a major in the piano. After the vocal line ceases in measure fifty-one the accompaniment continues for four measures in the same manner until the viola and cello arrive on e in measure fifty-five which becomes the dominant of a major, the key of the Coda.
Measures fifty-six through seventy-seven are classified as a coda for three reasons. First, the poetic stanza supplies a sympathetic quality for musical coda material. The stanza answers the question of the poem, "Where?" It thrusts the thought exclusively into the future and generally summarizes and climaxes the aesthetic mood, that of a contemplation of life after death. Secondly, the musical material is derived from elements in the previous sections. While this factor alone does not define a coda, it is nevertheless part of a larger definition. Thirdly, what Vaughan Williams does with the musical material communicates the sense of an unrelenting, though slow, march to the finish. Likewise, there is an impression of finality every time the downward leap of a fifth occurs (e.g.; measures fifty-eight and fifty-nine, vocal line).

The alternating chord pattern from the introduction is developed beginning at measure fifty-six, first centering around $a$, although there is no chord progression extensive enough to definitely establish $a$-major at this point. This alternation between the $a$ major and $b$ major chords, both in second inversions in measures fifty-six through sixty is the first of a series of parallel chords which eventually descends stepwise a full octave back to $a$ at measure sixty-six. The example illustrates this parallel motion.
Above this parallel movement, played by the piano in measures fifty-six through sixty-six, the voice sings a line reminiscent of both Sections A and B. There is the flowing character of A made possible by the triplets and primarily conjunct motion;

and there is the recitative-like repeated note figure characteristic of B.
Still, the line has the individuality of being less rhapsodic than A but more lyrical than B. Too, the accompaniment is couched in the major mode exclusively whereas the previous sections have been a mixture of major and minor and even the Phrygian mode. The effect of the parallel major chords and the calm but flowing vocal line is that of serenity, an appropriate matching of atmosphere for the poetry.

At measure sixty-six the first violin enters, beginning a compressed imitation of the vocal line.

![Fig. 50--"Clun," m. 66-69](image)

The piano accompaniment returns to the rather static pattern of alternating a-major and b-major chords for three and one-half measures from measure sixty-six through the second beat of measure sixty-nine. The cello joins the first violin an octave lower at one beat before measure seventy, completing the imitation alone from the second beat of measure seventy through measure seventy-three. At measure sixty-nine the piano part begins another stepwise descent from b to a on the first two beats of measure seventy-three.

The final four measures are a postlude to the whole cycle even though the material is basically that of the last song.
The full quintet plays the alternating $a$ and $b$-major chord pattern as the piano has done before; and a sense of finality is felt as the right hand of the piano part ascends through different inversions of the $a$ and $b$-major chords to the final widely voiced $a$-major chord, played after a two beat rest.

Vaughan Williams completes his cycle with . . . an atmosphere of unearthly peace. This music . . . calls to mind a passage in Robert Bridge's 'The Testament of Beauty':

The perfect intonation of the major triad is sweetest of all sounds; and all the ambitious flights of turbulent harmony come in the end to rest with the fulfillment of its liquidating cloze.  

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CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Vaughan Williams was able to find in Housman's poetry the simplicity and directness which suited his ideals. Housman's poetry was, in this way, the tangible fulfillment of his philosophy that true art is the expression of an artist attuned to the life of his own community. Housman's poems were about English people and places. They were instilled with the spirit of folk-poetry, both in subject matter and formal arrangement. Vaughan Williams' interest in ordinary people and activities is verified by his years of collecting folk songs among the people of England. Both men felt that their respective arts should stimulate not the intellectual but the spiritual and physical regions of man's makeup. This is evident in Vaughan Williams' confession that when he heard a "fine tune" or music of Wagner he recognized it as if he had known it all his life.¹ Housman definitely stated that poetry was not of the intellect. The composer repeatedly implied the same qualification for good music. "Music must say the right

¹Vaughan Williams, "Musical Autobiography,", p. 32.
thing at the right time regardless of whether it has been said before. He was insistent that music say the mot juste at the proper time. Both men strongly defended the position that their respective arts should penetrate the ultimate realities of life through the medium of beauty. It is on this plane of spiritual insight and physical beauty that the two men are alike. Housman states that "poetry is not the thing said but the way of saying it."²

"On Wenlock Edge" has a special appeal which Vaughan Williams has achieved by combining direct and straightforward narrative with descriptive and dramatic music. He creates unity and continuity through the use of cyclical elements and a pervading sense of one total orchestral sound rather than a voice-verses-accompaniment texture. On the other hand, there is much variety in the orchestral texture, in the contrast of lyrical and recitative-like declamatory passages; in the various means through which he employs the cyclical elements; in the different types of poetic texts; and in the combination of conventional and modal harmony.

Before reexamining the characteristics of the entire cycle, however, it is necessary to review the general disposition of each song. "On Wenlock Edge" deals with man's reflection on the inevitability of fate, the unrelenting

²Housman, The Name and Nature of Poetry, p. 35.
passage of time, and his own relation to the ancient Roman. They share a common station in that both men are thrust into time, live a little while, and after the "gale of life" has buffeted them for a few years they become part of the "ashes under Uricon." The piano quintet sets the mood by imitating the storm of "gale of life" while the singer in a declamatory manner, advances the narrative.

"From far, from eve and morning" is also about a man's inner thoughts. It tells of a spirit who is carried on the wind and becomes a reality by the chance meeting of many winds. Its sojourn is limited and of uncertain length. The piano in the first and last parts effects an harp-like image with common triadic chords, and the string quartet in the middle section portrays the urgency and uncertainty of the spirit's visit. The voice relates the message on a calm, primarily conjunctive and restrained melodic line.

A continually increasing sense of pathos is the tone of "Is my team ploughing." As the story unfolds, the dead man learns of his living friend's marriage to his former sweetheart. The dead man interprets the marriage as a betrayal of trust on the part of his living friend. In the music the composer has attempted to capture two different atmospheres: (1) that of the present world and, (2) that of the world beyond death. The strings conjure a mysterious sound while the dead man speaks and the piano emphasizes the agitated attitude of the living man's answer.
"Oh, when I was in love with you" is a poem about a youth's reaction to a past love affair. He is unconcerned that his infatuation has passed. The music is light and fanciful; the dance-like rhythm and airy texture provide a lively accompaniment.

There are several moods in "Bredon Hill." The story, told by a young man, concerns his sweetheart's death and their relationship before her death. Bells, which toll the passage of time and events, finally become the symbol of the young man's own rendezvous with the realities of time and fate. The bells are present throughout the several sections of the song and the musical emphasis is on the impressionistic portrayal of the young man's changing attitude and frustration. The voice alternates between lyrical and declamatory styles as the pathetic implications of the poetry unfold.

"Clun" is about an older man of resolute action and calm assurance in his attitude toward death. His life has not been easy, but he has dealt positively with time and fate. The piano quintet plays mostly common chords with a variety of key changes. The pervading musical character is one of lyricism and flowing melody. The song ends in a quiet, serene mood, a fitting end for so vigorous a song cycle.

This music not only sets the mood for the songs, but in some instances describes a dramatic picture. The storm or "the gale of life" in the first song derives its fierce
character from the series of parallel chords built on the interval of a sixth in the introduction as they sweep up and down. The sound of the wind is continued into the accompaniment of the vocal line with the piano arpeggios and the pedal tremolo in the strings. This repeated rise and fall of the arpeggios in the piano and the continuous presence of the restless movement in the strings are effective in symbolizing the storm.

In "Bredon Hill" the bells are portrayed by several different means but they are easily recognized as bells. First there is the alternating pattern of the fourths in the introduction. The thirds in the piano part of the introduction to Section C and the unison a in the same section are also the bells ringing. Vaughan Williams paints a musical picture of the many reverberating overtones with the sustained string pedal and the clouding of the harmonies by one seventh chord superimposed over another. For instance there is the quality of declamation in "On Wenlock Edge," "Is my team ploughing," and "Bredon Hill" heard in the use of the repeated note pattern, cyclical element J. "From far, from eve and morning" is very much like the coda of "Clun" in the general austerity of the quiet combination of repeated notes, triplets and the "falling close" of the melodic fourth and fifth at the end of a line. The appearance of a descending chromatic line, cyclical element K, in several of the
songs "On Wenlock Edge," "Is my team ploughing," and "Oh, when I was in love with you," keeps reemphasizing the uncertainty or mystery which dominates the cycle.

The cyclical elements weld the different songs together and relate them to one another. The lyrical melodies of "Bredon Hill" and "Clun" are the final development of the arch figures which began as part of the storm picture in "On Wenlock Edge" and played an important part throughout all other songs. Vaughan Williams used the alternation figure, (cyclical element H) to enhance the restless nature of youth, the wind, the bells, and finally, mellowed age. To give a sense of continuity the composer changes this restlessness to serenity in the final song by stretching the alternation into longer note values. These instances illustrate the unifying function of the cyclical elements. Another unifying factor is the juxtaposition of modal and tonal harmonies throughout the cycle. "On Wenlock Edge" gives the impression of g-minor tonality but the parallel motion and emphasis of the flatted seventh tone is definitely a modal approach. In "From far, from eve and morning," the chords are triadic and simple. There is even a touch of tonality in the middle section, as the roots of the chords progress by fifths. Nevertheless the parallel movement, the progression of chords with roots a second or third apart, and the frequent chromatic changes of significant scale
steps emphasize the modal harmony. "Clun" changes from tonality to modality as it shifts into the Phrygian mode. In the final section the parallel motion prevails over the a-major scale orientation; and the unconventional treatment of otherwise tonal chord vertical arrangements effects a modal ending to the cycle.

By his own admission, some of the atmospheric effects achieved in this cycle may be attributed to Vaughan Williams' study in France immediately prior to the composition of "On Wenlock Edge." However this cycle is not a copy of Ravel or Debussy for moods and the descriptions of nature are much more obvious, much more direct than one finds in French impressionistic works. For instance, there is little similarity in the final aesthetic effect between Vaughan Williams' cycle and Debussy's "Fetes Galantes," although many of the same compositional devices are used. Neither is there any of the complexities of Ravel's Gaspart da la Nuit in the piano part of "On Wenlock Edge." Yet they both possess vivid color and strong rhythmic drive.

Some of the songs evidence certain weaknesses. In "Is my team ploughing" the two different atmospheres of the living man and the dead man are not altogether in harmony with the poet's idea of the two men meeting in a homogeneous environment. The many and varied sections in "Bredon Hill" tend to break the continuity of the poem and defy a sense of
singular climax. There is a tendency toward too much melodrama and extreme tone painting in "On Wenlock Edge" and "Is my team ploughing." However, the songs which follow each of these respectively - "From far, from eve and morning" and "Oh, when I was in love with you" - offer relief from the tension of the melodrama.

The tampering with the prosody of the poetry and the excision of two stanzas of "Is my team ploughing" can possibly be overlooked if the cycle is viewed as a complete unit. It is important to realize that when poems become part of a musical composition the criterion for criticism must be something other than that for poetry alone. Vaughan Williams states that

the art of music differs from poetry . . . in this, that it involves two distinct processes - that of invention and that of presentation.

In the other arts it is not so, the invention and presentation are one process . . . The poet writes his poem and there it is for everyone to read if we understand the meaning of the words. But a musical composition when invented is only half finished, and until the actual sound is produced that composition does not exist.\(^3\)

It is this total effect of the cycle which proves its worth. Only by an enlightened and sensitive performance can the music have its proper meaning and ultimate effect.

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