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Form: Messiaen's 'Downfall'?

GARETH HEALEY

Abstract

Messiaen rarely commented on form. His posthumously published seven-volume *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie* offers an important new perspective on many aspects of his music; yet despite the vast amount of information that the composer's surveys of his works disclose – details that, in many cases, only he himself could have supplied – his analyses do have certain limitations, notably with regard to form. In a largely complimentary essay on Messiaen in *La Musique depuis Debussy* (1961), André Hodeir closes with a scathing assessment of Messiaen's activity in the domain of form. In order to assess the validity of Hodeir's comments, I have surveyed Messiaen's analyses, proposed a hypothetical taxonomy of formal models in a range of the composer's works, and attempted to place his thinking in the wider context of attitudes to form in the twentieth century.

In his notoriously outspoken survey of the contemporary music scene from roughly 1900 to 1960, *La Musique depuis Debussy*, André Hodeir considers the career, early writings, and musical language of Messiaen. Intermittently complimentary, this essay nevertheless concludes with a scathing assessment under the heading 'Messiaen's Downfall: Form':

> In his attempt to overhaul musical idiom, this eminent technician, this extraordinarily keen-eared harmonist, this erudite and discerning analyst was defeated by that obstacle which has been the stumbling block of every composer since Debussy: *form*. In this domain, Messiaen has proven completely – and, I fear, definitively – impotent. For it soon becomes apparent that the most anachronistic aspect of Messiaen's music is its ultra-static character.[1]

Hodeir's study is now over forty years old (the first part, dedicated to Stravinsky, Bartók, and the Second Viennese School, initially appeared in the author's *La Musique étrangère contemporaine* of 1954, and Messiaen, Boulez, and Barraqué were added for the publication of the complete volume in 1961). Succinctly described by Françoise Bayle as 'composer, writer, eclectic spirit, fervent discoverer and initiator of jazz music of all kinds, arranger and jazzman',[2] Hodeir is primarily associated with jazz music through his writings, compositions, and recordings (he performed as a violinist under the pseudonym Claude

1 Hodeir, *Since Debussy*, 114 (translator's emphasis). The original French text is: 'Dans sa reconstruction du langage, cet éminent technicien, cet harmoniste à l'oreille étonnament [*sic*] fine, cet analyste érudit et pénétrant, échouera sur la pierre où, depuis Debussy, tous les maîtres étaient venus buter: la Forme. Ici l'impuissance de Messiaen est totale et, on peut le craindre, définitive. Bientôt se révèle l'aspect le plus anachronique de l'œuvre messiaenien: son caractère ultra-statique' (*La Musique depuis Debussy*, 97–8).

2 Notes to *Le Temps du temps réel*.

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Laurence). While his association with such major figures as Django Reinhardt points towards the jazz mainstream, as a composer he strove to extend the boundaries of his chosen field through his theoretical knowledge and willingness to embrace new mergers – between jazz and serialism, for example. Arguably, his most daring experiment was *Jazz et jazz* (1951), an early fusion between jazz and *musique concrète*, but this was largely a by-product of his friendship with Pierre Schaeffer and was not a direction he pursued.

As a former student of Messiaen and an acquaintance of several of the most prominent musicians of the post-war Parisian scene, Hodeir was in a favourable position to comment on contemporary musical developments, and his many perceptive insights remain thought-provoking today. However, given the militant climate of musical criticism at that time, his judgements, perhaps unsurprisingly, are not always notable for their balance or level-headedness. There are glaring inconsistencies (a comparable notion can be regarded as positive in Webern yet negative in Messiaen) as well as a penchant for sweeping generalization (the 'failures' of both serialism and Messiaen in general). While Hodeir grudgingly approves of some aspects of Messiaen's work – his harmony, for example – the composer's approach to form is the subject of his most stinging condemnation, as the above quotation shows. This would not greatly matter, perhaps, were it not for the fact that a number of other commentators,[3] through their reluctance to discuss form in any detail, tacitly echo his judgement, thereby confirming Messiaen's 'downfall'.

After brief adverse comparisons with the formal mastery of the 'greatest Western music' of Bach and Beethoven, Hodeir goes on to write: 'Messiaen has proved capable of inventing only the most cursory formal order; he is probably the first to have realized its inadequacy, but with the result that he has turned to *disorder* for his salvation.'[4] Hodeir does not elaborate on his comments, preferring to take a swipe without offering any constructive criticism, and his direct quotations concerning Messiaen's attitude to sonata form are taken from a single paragraph in the composer's *Technique de mon langage musical*[5] and are not placed in context.

In his many interviews and writings Messiaen rarely commented on form in his own music, but new material has come to light in his *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie* which offers a new perspective on this crucial aspect of his work. This seven-volume treatise is a collection of Messiaen's writings (many of them based on his teaching material at the Paris Conservatoire) from 1949 to 1992, compiled and edited by his widow Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen and by his former pupil Alain Louvier, the order of material having been decided by Messiaen shortly before his death. The *Traité* is immensely important, not only with regard to Messiaen scholarship, but also as a document of twentieth-century musical thought in general, and in particular of its relationship with extra-musical dimensions. While

3 Peter Hill and Paul Griffiths are notable examples.

4 Hodeir, *Since Debussy*, 116 (translator's emphasis). 'Pour n'avoir su réinventer qu'un ordre sommaire dont il fut sans doute le premier à sentir l'insuffisance, Messiaen devait être tenté de chercher son salut du côté du désordre' (*La Musique depuis Debussy*, 100).

5 Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, 50; Eng. trans., 40.

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numerous composers have published writings on music theory, on their own works, and on the compositions of fellow musicians, no one rivals Messiaen in the scale and detail that he provides. The treatise includes indispensable analyses of nine of his own works, a groundbreaking survey of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, descriptive commentaries on the music of Debussy, and myriad comments on other composers from Adam de la Halle to Stockhausen, and on musical concepts from Greek and Hindu rhythms through to 'irrational' rhythms. Details of Messiaen's interests in topics such as philosophy and literature add a further dimension.[6]

Messiaen's analyses of his own works disclose a vast amount of information, and in many cases only the composer himself could have supplied such detail of technical thought processes and programmatic imagery. However, the analyses do have their limitations, not least in the domain of form. A relatively small number of movements are prefaced by a brief formal outline, but such tables are sporadic and baldly presented. Messiaen had a tendency to concentrate on the minutiae of works, while largely omitting to elaborate on larger-scale structure. His reticence to discuss structural features in any depth contrasts sharply with the wealth of information in the *Traité* on technical and non-musical topics. At first glance, then, this massive source offers little defence against Hodeir's strictures. Virtually unique in Messiaen's other writings are the following passing comments in an interview with Claude Samuel:

> I don't believe in the 'concerto form'; most of the time it's supremely boring [. . .] I feel [formal classical moulds] are 'finished'. I haven't abandoned the eternal principle of development because that would be inconceivable, nor that of variation which is also timeless [. . .] It's in my *Catalogue d'oiseaux* and in *La fauvette des jardins* that you'll find my great formal innovation. There, instead of referring to an antique or classical mold, or even to some mold I might have invented, I sought to reproduce in condensed form the vivid course of the hours of day and night.[7]

Whether the forms Messiaen employs in his birdsong works are, in fact, a 'great innovation' is a matter for debate, and these comments hardly constitute a defence against Hodeir's charge of disorder, which needs to be seen in the context of an attitude to form that can only be discerned from Messiaen's works themselves.

A number of other commentators have made less judgemental reference to form in Messiaen, and Robert Sherlaw Johnson devotes a section of his explanation of Messiaen's musical language to the topic.[8] However, his observations are largely based on *Technique de mon langage musical* and therefore mainly cover Messiaen's early period; a wide-ranging, detailed overview of structure is not attempted. The greater part of the Messiaen literature (including writings by Sherlaw Johnson, Griffiths, and Hill) has, understandably, concentrated on rhythmic and harmonic features. Any larger formal considerations are usually

6 For a discussion of Messiaen's literary interests see Healey, 'Messiaen – Bibliophile'.
7 Messiaen, *Music and Color*, 116–17.
8 Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen*, 22–4.

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mentioned in passing, and none of these authors surveys form across a range of Messiaen's works. Anthony Pople's study of the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* is exceptional in that the form of the second movement is at least considered in detail.[9] Although illuminating articles have appeared on certain aspects of Messiaen's musical language, such as those by Cheong Wai-Ling on harmony,[10] the pioneering technical studies of Michèle Reverdy are still the primary source on the topic of form.[11] Within the existing Messiaen literature Reverdy's monographs still offer the most illuminating contrasts with the analytical content of the *Traité*, and reference will be made to them below.

Before returning to Hodeir's criticisms, I shall survey Messiaen's analyses of his works as given in the *Traité* and propose a hypothetical taxonomy of formal models in a range of his works.

Messiaen and Structure: Ten Hypothetical Models

A number of the structural outlines for each movement of a work as given in the present article were by Messiaen himself, either as preliminary headings to each movement of an analysis or in the course of his descriptions. The remainder have been added following an assessment of each movement. Whether or not details of the structure are supplied depends largely on Messiaen's capriciously varying styles of presentation. For example, his analysis of *Visions de l'Amen* does not penetrate as deeply into the work as does that of the *Turangalîla-Symphonie*, formal considerations being either far less in-depth or omitted completely. Table 1 is a condensing of the structural outlines of the nine works as presented in the *Traité*.[12] The sources of information fall into the following categories: (1) Messiaen clearly states the form prior to his analysis (OM1); (2) Messiaen gives structural subheadings within his discussion (OM2); (3) formal details are sparse or missing completely and have therefore been added by myself (GH).[13]

Messiaen does not usually give labels to his formal procedures, but it is possible to detect various patterns in his structures. If every movement of the nine works is categorized within ten hypothetical structural models, the information in Table 1 can be further condensed. The ten models are as follows:

1 *Non-retrogradable*. Contains either a fully non-retrogradable (i.e. palindromic) arrangement of sections (often with a coda) or a large non-retrogradable element that dominates the others.
2 *Alternate*. Two or more sections are alternated, usually with only slight variants.

9 Pople, *Messiaen: Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, 28–34.
10 Cheong, 'Messiaen's Triadic Colouration Modes as Interversion'; 'Messiaen's Chord Tables: Ordering the Disordered'; and 'Rediscovering Messiaen's Invented Chords'.
11 Reverdy, *L'Œuvre pour piano d'Olivier Messiaen*, and *L'Œuvre pour orchestre d'Olivier Messiaen*.
12 *Visions de l'Amen*, vol. 3, pp. 229–75; *Vingt regards*, vol. 2, pp. 437–509; *Harawi*, vol. 3, pp. 279–315; *Turangalîla-Symphonie*, vol. 2, pp. 151–384; *Quatre études*, vol. 3, pp. 123–70; *Messe de la Pentecôte*, vol. 4, pp. 83–124; *Livre d'orgue*, vol. 3, pp. 173–228; *Chronochromie*, vol. 3, pp. 79–120; *Sept haïkaï*, vol. 5/2, pp. 447–580.
13 Messiaen's terminology has been retained in Table 1. Neutral labels such as 'period' help to illustrate Messiaen's stance towards form.

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Table 1 Tabulation of the structure of the works analysed by Messiaen in the *Traité*

Movement		Structural outline	Source
Visions de l'Amen			
1	Amen de la Création	'Period' 1, 2, 3	GH
2	Amen des étoiles, de la planète à l'anneau	Theme, 1st development, 2nd development, 3rd development, Theme	OM1
3	Amen de l'agonie de Jésus	Strophe, Antistrophe, Epode	OM2
4	Amen du Désir	Theme 1, Theme 2, Reprise of theme 1, Reprise of theme 2, Coda	OM2
5	Amen des anges, des saints, du chant des oiseaux	Part 1, Birdsong, Reprise of part 1, Coda	OM1
6	Amen du Jugement	Phrase 1, Phrase 2, Variation of phrase 1	OM1
7	Amen de la Consommation	Period 1, Period 2, Period 1 transition, Period 3, Period 1, Period 2 transition, Transitional, Period 1 reprise, Period 3, New period	GH
Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus			
1	Regard du Père	Theme, Theme reprise, Coda	GH
2	Regard de l'Étoile	Introduction, Theme, Introduction reprise, Variations of theme, Introduction reprise, Coda	OM2
3	L'Échange	Asymmetric augmentation	OM2
4	Regard de la Vierge	Lullaby, Asymmetric augmentation, Lullaby, Birdsong, Lullaby, Asymmetric augmentation, Lullaby, Birdsong, Coda	GH
5	Regard du Fils sur le Fils	Canon, Birdsong, Canon, Birdsong, Canon, Coda	OM2
6	Par Lui tout a été fait	Exposition, Middle, Exposition retrograde, Fugal stretto, Final section	OM2
7	Regard de la Croix	Theme, Coda	GH
8	Regard des Hauteurs	Introduction, Birdsong, Song of Nightingale, Skylarks, Introduction, Birdsong, Blackbird, Coda	GH

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Table 1 *continued*

Movement		Structural outline	Source
9	Regard du Temps	Theme, Canon, Theme, Canon, Theme, Canon, Theme, Canon, Theme, Canon, Theme	OM2
10	Regard de l'esprit de Joie	Theme, 'Theme of Joy', Asymmetric augmentation, Hunting theme, 'Theme of Joy', 'Theme of God', 'Theme of Joy', Theme, Coda	OM2
11	Première communion de la Vierge	'Theme of God', Quote, Variation of 'Theme of God', Harmonization of D, Heartbeat, 'Theme of God', Coda	GH
12	La Parole toute puissante	Theme (Periods)	GH
13	Noël	Bell, Xylophone, Bell, Middle, Bell, Xylophone, Bell, Coda	OM2
14	Regard des Anges	Strophes 1–5	OM2
15	Le Baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus	'Sleep', 'Garden', 'Arms', 'Kiss', 'Shadow'	GH
16	Regard des Prophètes, des Bergers et des Mages	Introduction, Oboe, Middle, Oboe, Introduction reprise, Coda	OM2
17	Regard du Silence	Introduction, Strophe 1, Strophe 2, Coda	OM2
18	Regard de l'Onction terrible	Chromatic durations, Rocket-like groups, Chorale, Rocket-like groups, Chromatic durations	GH
19	Je dors, mais mon cœur veille	Introduction, 'Kiss', 'Love', 'Kiss', Introduction, Coda	GH
20	Regard de l'Église d'Amour	Large development, Large exposition	OM1
Harawi			
1	La Ville qui dormait, toi	Period 1, Period 1, Period 2, Period 2, Period 3	OM1
2	Bonjour toi, colombe verte	Period 1, Birdsong, Period 1, Birdsong, Period 2, Birdsong, Coda	OM1
3	Montagnes	Strophe 1, Canon, Strophe 2, Canon, Strophe 3	OM1
4	Doundou tchil	Introduction, Refrain, Couplet, Refrain, Introduction, Coda	OM1
5	L'Amour de Piroutcha	Strophes 1–2	OM1
6	Répétition planétaire	Cry, Incantation, Cry, Incantation, Theme and variations, Coda	OM1

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Table 1 *continued*

Movement		Structural outline	Source
7	Adieu	Period 1, Bells, Period 1, Bells, Period 2, Bells, Period 1, Bells, Period 3, Period 2, Bells in canon, Period 1, Period 4, Coda	OM1
8	Syllabes	Refrain, Couplet 1, Refrain, Couplet 2, Refrain, Magic syllable, Magic syllable, Coda	OM1
9	L'Escalier redit, gestes du soleil	Strophe 1, Strophe 2, Middle, Strophe 3	OM1
10	Amour oiseau d'étoile	Strophe 1, Strophe 1, Strophe 2	OM1
11	Katchikatchi les étoiles	Theme and variations, Incantation, Coda	OM1
12	Dans le noir	Period 1, Canon, Period 1, Canon, Period 2, Canon, Cry, Refrain, Coda	OM1
Turangalîla-Symphonie			
1	Introduction		GH
2	Chant d'amour 1	Introduction, Refrain, Couplet 1, Refrain, Couplet 2, Refrain, Development, Coda	OM1
3	Turangalîla 1	Section 1, Section 2, Section 3, Section 4, Section 5, Section 6	OM2
4	Chant d'amour 2	Scherzo, Bridge, Refrain/Trio, 2nd Refrain/Trio, Combination of trios, Bridge, Scherzo reprise, Cadenza, Coda	OM1
5	Joie du sang des étoiles	Exposition (refrain and couplet), Development ('personnages'), Recapitulation, Coda	OM1
6	Jardin du sommeil d'amour	Period 1 antecedent, Period 1 consequent, Period 2, Period 2, Period 1, Period 2	OM1
7	Turangalîla 2	Sections 1–8	OM2
8	Développement de l'amour	Introduction, Large development, Coda	OM1
9	Turangalîla 3	Superposition of techniques	GH
10	Final	Theme 1, Bridge, Theme 2, Development, Theme 1, Theme 2, 'Theme of Love', 'Theme of Love', Coda	OM1
Quatre études de rythme			
1	Île de feu 1	Theme, Variation 1, Variation 2, Variation 3, Theme 2, Variation 1 reprise	OM2
2	Mode de valeurs et d'intensités	N/A	

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Table 1 *continued*

Movement		Structural outline	Source
3	Neumes rythmiques	Triple line, Period 1, Prime number, Period 2, Triple line, Period 3, Prime number, Period 4, Triple line, Period 5, Prime number, Period 6, Triple line, Period 7, Prime number	OM2
4	Île de feu 2	Theme, Interversions, Variation 1, Interversions, Variation 2, Development, Interversions and theme, Theme, Dance theme, Coda	OM2
Messe de la Pentecôte			
1	Entrée (Les Langues de feu)	Rhythmic variations	GH
2	Offertoire (Les Choses visibles et invisibles)	Sections 1–7, Coda	OM1
3	Consécration (Le Don de Sagesse)	Refrain 1, Theme, Refrain 2, Theme, Refrain 1, Theme, Refrain 2, Theme, Refrains 1 and 2, Theme, Refrain 2	OM1
4	Communion (Les Oiseaux et les sources)	Introduction, Theme, Birdsong, Theme, Theme 2, Coda	OM2
5	Sortie (Le Vent de l'Esprit)	Sections 1–5	GH
Livre d'orgue			
1	Reprises par interversion	Sections 1–4	OM1
2	Pièce en trio	Rhythmic variations	GH
3	Les Mains de l'Abîme	Sections 1–4	OM1
4	Chants d'oiseaux	Miçra varna, Section 1, Miçra varna, Section 2, Miçra varna, Section 3, Miçra varna, Section 4	OM2
5	Pièce en trio	Interversions	GH
Chronochromie			
1	Introduction	Melody of timbres, Interversions, Superposition of interversions, Melody of timbres and birdsong, Superposition of interversions reprise, Swedish sea-eagle	GH

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Table 1 *continued*

Movement		Structural outline	Source
2	Strophe 1	Superposition of interversions	GH
3	Antistrophe 1	Songthrush/skylark, Ani/atilla, Chorale, Superposition of interversions	GH
4	Strophe 2	Superposition of interversions	GH
5	Antistrophe 2	As no. 3	
6	Epôde	Birdsong	GH
7	Coda	As no. 1	
Sept haïkaï			
1	Introduction	Superposition of rhythmic techniques	OM1
2	Le Parc de Nara et les lanternes de Pierre	Superposition of harmonic and rhythmic techniques	GH
3	Yamanaka-cadenza	Tutti, Cadenza, Tutti 2, Cadenza 2, Tutti 3, Cadenza 3	OM1
4	Gagaku	Period 1, Period 2, Commentary, Period 1 reprise, Period 2 reprise	OM1
5	Miyajima et le torii dans le mer	Superposition of harmonic techniques	OM1
6	Les Oiseaux de Karuizawa	Introduction, Couplet 1, Cadenza 1, Couplet 2, Cadenza 2, Introduction	OM1
7	Coda	As no. 1	

3 *Strophic*. Follows traditional strophic form, possibly with minor embellishments.
4 *Theme (and variations)*. A fairly loose interpretation of theme and variation form, as themes are not always varied in the established sense. Movements such as 'Regard du Père' (the first of the *Vingt regards*) contain only the repetition of a theme, and variations are omitted.
5 *Refrain and couplet*. A reasonably strict use of this form, partly influenced by Claude Le Jeune's *Le Printemps*.
6 *Sectional*. The simple label 'section' is used throughout, or the movement contains subdivisions governed by imagery.
7 *Sonata*. The movement is largely based on the sectional layout of traditional sonata form, possibly with small embellishments, and not necessarily with reference to orthodox tonal or thematic schemes.
8 *Superposition*. A number of (not necessarily related) techniques are used simultaneously.
9 *Single technique/Birdsong*. The movement is either entirely dominated by one technique, which ends when the process involved is complete, or it consists entirely of birdsong.
10 *Two elements*. Two strongly identifiable elements are juxtaposed.

The result of this categorization is given as Table 2 (the numbers relate to the movements, as in Table 1). Those movements with no obviously discernable form are omitted from Table 2.

To assess how representative the ten hypothetical models are, the structural comments of Reverdy have been tabulated and added to Table 2, under the headings proposed for the analyses in the *Traité*, and I have inserted other important works in Messiaen's output (the nine analysed in the *Traité* are highlighted in bold). Admittedly, there is an element of finding the 'best fit' in Table 2, but all of Reverdy's views on form (with which I broadly concur), pertaining to works dating from the 1920s onwards, are accommodated quite neatly by the ten proposed models. Reverdy's studies carry authority as they have Messiaen's imprimatur.[14] I shall now elaborate briefly on the application of each of the models in turn.

Non-retrogradable form

The movements in non-retrogradable form demonstrate Messiaen's application to the structural domain of a technique designed for small-scale use. Messiaen exploits the possibilities that non-retrogradability affords on a formal level, and the instances cited in Table 2 range from literal palindromes to more complex structures. The eighteenth of the *Vingt regards* is a perfect example of the symmetry produced by this form;[15] not only are its sections non-retrogradable, but the final set of chromatic durations is a reverse of the first. A coda is often appended to this type of structure, as in the fifth of the *Visions de l'Amen*. The most literal of the non-retrogradable structures is observable in the sixth *Regard*; its retrograde of the exposition results in total symmetry, to which Messiaen adds a stretto of the fugal

14 Reverdy is a former pupil of Messiaen, and the composer endorsed her analytical studies.
15 To avoid unnecessary repetition of individual titles, movements will be referred to by their number only.

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Table 2 Ten hypothetical models derived from the *Traité*, including the analyses of Reverdy

Works/ Date of completion	Non-retro-gradable	Alternate	Strophic	Theme (and variations)	Refrain and couplet	Sectional	Sonata	Super-position	Single technique/ Birdsong	Two elements
EARLY WORKS										
Préludes (1929)		4		6		1	8			2, 3, 5, 7
Fantaisie (1932)										1
L'Ascension (1933)						3				1, 2
Tombeau (1935)				1						
WORKS OF THE 1940S										
Quatuor (1941)		4		5, 7, 8	6	3		1		2
Visions (1943)	**2, 5, 6**	**7**	**3**	**1**						**4**
Liturgies (1944)			3	2						1
Regards (1944)	**6, 13, 16, 18, 19**	**2, 4, 5, 9**	**14, 17**	**1, 7, 12**		**8, 10, 11, 15**	**20**		**3**	
Harawi (1945)		**2, 12**	**3, 5, 9, 10**	**1, 11**	**4, 8**					**6, 7**
Turangalîla (1948)				**6, 10**	**2**	**1, 3, 7**	**5, 8**	**9**		**4**
EXPERIMENTAL PERIOD										
Cantéyodjayâ (1949)		1								
Études (1950)		**3**		**1, 4**					**2**	
Messe (1950)		**3**				**2, 5**			**1**	**4**
Livre (1951)		**4**				**1, 3**			**2, 5, 6**	

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Table 2 *continued*

Works/ Date of completion	Non-retro-gradable	Alternate	Strophic	Theme (and variations)	Refrain and couplet	Sectional	Sonata	Super-position	Single technique/ Birdsong	Two elements
BIRDSONG WORKS										
Réveil (1953)						1				
Exotiques (1956)						1				
Catalogue (1958)			5		11, 12	2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13				1, 7
La Fauvette (1970)						1				
LATE PERIOD										
Chronochromie (1960)						**3, 5**		**2, 4**	**6**	**1, 7**
Haïkaï (1962)		**3**		**4**				**1, 2, 5, 7**		**6**
Cité Celeste (1963)						1				
Et exspecto (1964)						1, 2, 6				3
Transfiguration (1969)				3, 7		1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14				
Canyons (1974)		8		10	11	12				1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7
Éclairs (1991)				1, 5, 6, 11		2, 7, 8, 10		4	3, 9	

material established in this exposition.[16] The 'final section' of the piece lies outside the strict constructional scheme of the fugal material; its importance resides more in the reiteration of one of the cyclic themes – the 'Theme of God' – within the *Vingt regards* as a whole. Non-retrogradable form had the most limited lifespan of all the models.

Alternate form

A prime example of alternate form in its basic state is the ninth of the *Vingt regards*. Here Messiaen is content to interchange the primary theme with only one other element – a rhythmic canon. This produces an interlocking structure. However, the number of elements that undergo alternation is not limited to two: the fourth *Étude*, 'Île de feu 2', has three, producing a more intricate and pliable result in that the pattern of alternation is more varied:

A B C B D E F A G Coda

Additional flexibility is achievable when alternate form overlaps the principles of rondo structure, as in the last of the *Visions de l'Amen*. This piece could be labelled in the following way:

$$A\ B\ A^1\ C\ A\ B^1\ D\ A\ C\ E$$

It is probable (in view of his somewhat permissive nomenclature for both rhythm and harmony) that Messiaen would happily regard this structure as an instance of rondo form. The similarities between alternate and the sometimes quite sophisticated rondo forms are demonstrated by the categorization of *Cantéyodjayâ* in Table 2 as alternate form, and Reverdy's assertion that this work has a first rondo with a second contained within.[17] However, the style of varied alternation, as seen in the fourth *Étude*, would seem more apt for this extremely experimental work than the more rigid nature of a rondo as proposed by Reverdy.

Strophic form

Messiaen's most simple strophic designs consist of the concatenation of any number of strophes, as in the fourteenth of the *Vingt regards*. Such a structure allows the restatement of material with slight variants, as distinct from more formal variations. The more complex strophic structure of the third song of *Harawi* has the interpolation of a canon within strophic design. It is arguable that this piece might equally well be classified as alternate form, and there are many such grey areas when considering structure in Messiaen's music. However, in this instance strophic form is the predominant component, as opposed to the more equally weighted elements in alternate form. Movements working on the principle of alternation also exhibit a slightly greater degree of flexibility than do strophic forms.

16 The structure of this *Regard* was surely influenced by Machaut's *Ma fin est mon commencement*, in which Messiaen observed literal retrogradation. Messiaen's comments on Machaut's piece are found in the *Traité*, vol. 1, p. 45, and vol. 3, p. 80.

17 Reverdy, *L'Œuvre pour piano d'Olivier Messiaen*, 61.

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Messiaen's use of strophes elsewhere is a throwback to the ancient proposition of strophe, antistrophe, and epode.[18] As Table 2 shows, strophic form appears almost exclusively in the works of the 1940s. The only other instance occurs in the fifth piece of *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, which Sherlaw Johnson interprets as a refrain and couplet design.[19] This is again a matter for debate, but when comparisons are made with all of the other movements listed in Table 2, rather than just within the context of the *Catalogue*, the strophic model is the more persuasive.

Theme (and variations)

In his works of the early 1940s Messiaen's use of themes to articulate the form of a movement shows considerable consistency of approach. The primary theme of a piece (cyclic themes in the case of the first of the *Visions de l'Amen* and the first and seventh *Regards*) is reiterated with small variants – either to the theme itself, or to the surrounding material, or occasionally to the texture as a whole. Such a procedure gives an effect of overall stasis, which Hodeir notes and (surely not coincidentally) fits with the imagery behind the opening pieces of the *Visions de l'Amen* and *Vingt regards*. The theme (and variation) movements (as I have listed them) in the *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* are discussed by Messiaen in *Technique de mon langage musical*.[20] When describing the smaller-scale elements of the construction, he commonly employs the terms 'song-sentence' and 'binary sentence', and he interchanges the labels 'commentary' and 'variation'. Messiaen's first notable use of variation form is in the *Thème et variations* (1932). While discussing the piece, Sherlaw Johnson highlights the apparent incompatibility between this form and Messiaen's idiosyncratic approach to harmony:

> Although Messiaen successfully uses the principle of variation when applied to melody (as in the seventh movement of the *Quatuor*), his harmony does not form the basis of a theme on which variations can be written. The theme of Messiaen's *Thème et Variations* only provides unity at the risk of stagnation, because its harmony lacks the variety of progression [on which Classical variations depend].[21]

Messiaen subsequently employed this form in the eleventh song of *Harawi* and twice in the *Quatre études*.

Refrain and couplet

This form features relatively infrequently in the works covered in Table 2. Its first appearance, in the sixth movement of the *Quatuor*, reveals a fairly straightforward design, but Messiaen avoids monotony by subjecting the refrain to his device of 'change of rhythm and

18 Messiaen discusses the principles behind the ancient Greek 'chorus' in the *Traité*, vol. 3, p. 244.
19 Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen*, 149.
20 Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, 42–5; Eng. trans., 37–8.
21 Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen*, 29–30.

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register' towards the conclusion of the piece. In the fourth song of *Harawi* the form is combined with non-retrogradability: there is only a single refrain and couplet, which is integrated into the palindromic arrangement. The eighth song of the same work and the second movement of the *Turangalîla-Symphonie* have a refrain and couplet scheme reminiscent of rondo form, both commencing with an A B A C A structure (the *Turangalîla* movement has an introduction added). These three instances highlight the lack of identity present in refrain and couplet form, and the scarcity of its use suggests a possible recognition of its limitations, as either a compositional or an analytical tool, on Messiaen's part. His analyses of works such as Claude Le Jeune's *Le Printemps*[22] would have allowed Messiaen to become fully acquainted with the potential of the form, and it may well be that he felt there was little to add.

Sectional form

This is the most common model employed by Messiaen. It is present in each of his compositional periods and is adaptable to numerous contexts and techniques, which is hardly surprising as this type of form merely denotes a succession of often unrelated material 'blocks'. The rules governing its application in Messiaen's analyses appear to be flexible. He tends either simply to use the label 'section' or to join together passages dictated by imagery. Movements that align any number of 'sections', such as the second and seventh of the *Turangalîla-Symphonie*, are primarily governed by one or more techniques. Such neutral labelling fits with the austere character of the pieces themselves (apart from the *Turangalîla* movements, the others that fall in this category are the second and fifth movements of the *Messe de la Pentecôte* and the first and third movements of the *Livre d'orgue*). A prime example of imagery dictating the sectionalized form of a movement is found in the fifteenth movement of the *Vingt regards*. From the theoretical point of view, there is no difference between the use of terms such as 'The Sleep', 'The Garden', and 'Section *n*'. It is rather a question of semantics and Messiaen's desire to guide the listener and performer(s) through the piece. Sectional form dominates the birdsong works, although, as both Sherlaw Johnson and Reverdy point out, the principles of strophic and refrain and couplet forms operate at a secondary level within the primary 'sections'. In essence these pieces conform globally to the sectional aesthetic, with enclosed inherited forms providing a substructure.

Sonata form

A similar two-level structuring applies to Messiaen's sonata forms. He employs a kind of sonata form in one of his technically advanced movements, the fifth of the *Turangalîla-Symphonie*. Sophisticated processes are embedded within the formal scheme, which acts as a framework. The exposition is a self-contained refrain and couplet design, in the manner of those discussed above. Messiaen uses the development section to take full advantage of his

22 In *Traité*, vol. 1, pp. 183–232.

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technique of 'personnages',[23] while remaining true to the principles of the form. The recapitulation functions, broadly, in a traditional sense, in that the home key and opening material are restated but with a fragmentation of techniques (predominantly 'personnages'). Messiaen constructs an extraordinary type of sonata form in the final piece of the *Vingt regards*, in which, as he explains, the development precedes the exposition of the 'Theme of God'. No further rationale is given for this, but it is possible that such a structure was planned as a reversal of the sonata concept. If so, it is Messiaen's most extreme manipulation of established forms. The placing of the exposition at the end is possibly also the result of theological considerations: the entire work starts and finishes with the same theme in the home key, and this acts as a metaphor for the timelessness of God. The exposition is static (as it contains little more than a glorification of the 'Theme of God') and is representative of the divine, and it must be preceded by the dynamic humanism of the development.

Superposition

This form shows another strong link between structure and technique, and is employed in some of Messiaen's most complex movements. It consists entirely of a stratification of procedures, particularly those that can extend over the length of a movement, such as interversions.[24] The movements from *Chronochromie* listed in Table 2 use the superimposed interversions set out by Messiaen in the *Traité*. More interesting superpositions occur in the *Turangalîla-Symphonie* and *Sept haïkaï*, in which a variety of rhythmic and harmonic techniques are layered. This manner of constructing a movement strongly places the emphasis on the vertical plane, and therefore any sense of progression is lacking. Verticality allows a contemplation of state at any given instant, as opposed to the evolving nature of other structures. The first and last of the *Sept haïkaï* are a demonstration of the frequent absence in superposition form of the 'goal' present in many other forms. The first movement ends rather arbitrarily, only to be 'restarted' six movements later. It is typical for pieces constructed around superposition form to be terminated arbitrarily, rather than when they have achieved their (musical) objective. Thus in the first movement of the *Quatuor*, for instance, 'what we hear in the three minutes of the actual movement is only a fragment of an enormous process',[25] a symbol of eternity. This contrasts with 'L'Échange' (the third of the *Vingt regards*), a prime example of a piece that ends when an objective has been realized: once the process of asymmetric augmentation has run its course (in other words, returned to its original pitches), the piece concludes. The return to superposition in Messiaen's late period highlights the validity of the notion of superposition form within both programmatic and non-programmatic contexts.

23 The essential elements of 'personnages' are an increasing cell, a decreasing cell, and one that remains unchanged. For a full explanation of this technique see Healey, 'Messiaen and the Concept of "Personnages" '.

24 Interversion was a device Messiaen employed to permutate a series of pitches or (more commonly) durations. A number of methods of permutation were devised. For an explanation of interversion as found in the *Quatre études* see Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen*, 109.

25 Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, 94.

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Single technique/Birdsong

This form differs from superposition in that the procedure concerned usually creates a more satisfyingly self-contained unit. A textbook example is found in the third of the *Vingt regards*: once the asymmetric augmentation completes its course, the piece ends. The sixth movement of *Chronochromie* consists entirely of birdsong operating in an analogous way to the single technique: a lack of juxtaposition of material is an inherent characteristic of both. That the movement has acquired an element of notoriety is purely a consequence of Messiaen's bold decision to employ this single idea.[26] The second *Étude*, 'Mode de valeurs', shares a similarity with the 'open-ended' nature of superposition form. 'Total serialism',[27] the only procedure present, does not develop in any sense, and therefore Messiaen had little option but to terminate the piece arbitrarily. On a number of occasions, this type of form serves to showcase the highest point of complexity that Messiaen achieved in certain technical procedures.

Two elements

The juxtaposition of two elements is a feature to which Messiaen turned many times. There are numerous parallels with sectional form, but here a maximum of two elements are employed, as opposed to the theoretically limitless number of 'sections'. The form with two elements is differentiated from alternate form by the more rigid ordering and the smaller number of its thematic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements.

Messiaen's Structural Thinking in Context

To return now to Hodeir's comments regarding supposed structural inadequacies in Messiaen's works: comparison can be made both with the composer's declared musical influences and with later composers' use of form to ascertain how his ideas may have been formulated and how others approached this often problematical domain. Hodeir singles out Messiaen's view of sonata form for criticism:

> His examination of what might be retained of the sonata form led him to conclude that 'there is only one aspect of that form which is obsolete: the recapitulation' [. . .] [N]o more forceful assertion of the tonal principle was ever devised [. . .] A composer who has come to realize that this basic element is 'obsolete', and yet at the same time tries to reinstate concomitant elements (such as the terminal development), is merely endorsing the creation of a bastard form.[28]

26 In the *Traité* (vol. 3, p. 98) Messiaen comments on the unfavourable reaction of the audience at the early performances of the movement.

27 This widely used term is inaccurate, as the random nature of the process is at odds with the strict ordering of serialism. 'Mode de valeurs' is better described as modal.

28 Hodeir, *Since Debussy*, 115. 'Examinant ce qui peut être conservé de la forme-sonate, il conclut "qu'une chose a vieilli dans cette forme: la réexposition" [. . .] [O]n n'a pas trouvé de plus forte affirmation du principe tonal [. . .] Constater qu'un élément aussi essentiel "a vieilli", et prétendre néanmoins restaurer certains éléments adjacents (tels

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Hodeir does not take into consideration the fact that Messiaen chose to construct a number of alternative versions of sonata form, at least to a certain extent. For example, the fifth movement of the *Turangalîla-Symphonie* ('Joie du sang des étoiles') conforms to many of the traditional requirements of sonata form, even aspects of tonal layout (although Messiaen's musical language precludes the appearance of modulations): an exposition in D♭ major, development in E major, a recapitulation in D♭ major, and a coda in the same key.[29] While it may be argued that this movement does not fulfil the thematic elements of the textbook form, Messiaen stills adheres to the tonal plan on which Hodeir places such emphasis. And mention has already been made of the final *Regard*, which contains a reversal of the standard ordering of the exposition and development.

Messiaen was not alone in his 'creation of a bastard form', and indeed he was certainly not the first to fly in the face of some of the fundamental precepts of traditional sonata form. An examination of the forms employed by one of the composers often analysed in his classes – Alban Berg – provides an alternative viewpoint on the manipulation of sonata structure. Although Berg's first composition, the Piano Sonata, contains the traditional sectional components of the form, his decision to dispense with the development in works such as the first movement of the *Lyric Suite* is a more radical departure, only tenuously connected to the tradition of sonatina form. Parameters other than theme and key progressively assume a greater role in articulating large-scale form, as Dave Headlam observes, initially of the Piano Sonata: 'The tempo and dynamic groupings also define and support the sonata-form divisions [. . .] The use of tempo in the definition of form becomes an increasingly important component of Berg's later music.'[30] Douglas Jarman has also commented on Berg's use of rhythmic elements to define structure, and parallels may be drawn with the characterization of form through the use of rhythmic technique in Messiaen.[31] Table 3 shows a slightly amended version of Jarman's comments on the *Chamber Concerto* (the 'exposition' label is taken from Mosco Carner),[32] aligned with a comparably ambitious formal structure in Messiaen's 'Joie du sang des étoiles'. Although Messiaen adds harmonic elements to his rhythmic procedures, the relationship between technique and form shows striking similarities. Three of the categories identified in Table 2 – sectional, superposition, and single technique – generally rely on rhythms or rhythmic procedures to produce the final form. Indeed, in most cases of superposition and single technique the rhythmic procedure *is* the form.

Messiaen's experimentation with form is a continuation of the attitudes of many other composers active in the first half of the twentieth century. As he explored a wide range of repertoire in his analysis classes in Paris from the early 1940s, elements of those attitudes and the resulting designs must have impacted on his thinking to some degree. Although

que le développement terminal), n'est-ce pas consentir à la mise au jour d'une forme bâtarde' (*La Musique depuis Debussy*, 99).

29 It should be noted that Messiaen was often very free with his use of terminology, and although the movement is rooted in D♭ major, his modal methods substitute for the hierarchy of tonal harmony.

30 Headlam, *The Music of Alban Berg*, 23.

31 Jarman, *The Music of Alban Berg*, 152–3.

32 Carner, *Alban Berg*, 135.

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Table 3 Technical procedures as formal determinants in selected movements by Berg and Messiaen

Berg, 'Rondo ritmico' from *Chamber Concerto* (from Jarman, *The Music of Alban Berg*, 154)

Bar nos	Rhythmic treatment	Formal function	
481–534	Hauptrhythmus	Introduction	Exposition
534–9	Main rhythm	Theme	
540–9	Hauptrhythmus (+ fragmentary subsidiary)	Transition	
550–70	Subsidiary rhythm (+Hauptrhythmus)	Episode	
571–90	Main rhythm (+Hauptrhythmus)	Return of theme	
591–601	Main rhythm (modified)	Transition	
602–29	Subsidiary rhythm (+ modified Hauptrhythmus and main)	Return of episode	
631–62	Hauptrhythmus (retrograde and varied)	Development	
663–84	Hauptrhythmus (retrograde with main)		
685–96	Hauptrhythmus (original and retrograde)		
696–709	Juxtaposition of passages from previous movement of Chamber Concerto		
710b–37	Main rhythm	Coda	
737–85	Hauptrhythmus and main	Stretta	

Messiaen, 'Joie du sang des étoiles' from *Turangalîla-Symphonie*

Page/bar nos	Rhythmic/harmonic treatment	Formal function
163/1–187/9	Presentation of main theme	Exposition
188/1–196/8	Personnages rythmiques, mélodiques, and harmoniques	
197/1–199/10	Theme of the refrain combined with personnages mélodiques	
200/1–202/8	Transitional passage	
203/1–211/3	Retrograde reprise of the personnages rythmiques, mélodiques, and harmoniques	
211/4–214/4	Theme of the refrain combined with personnages mélodiques	
214/5–222/7	Development of the second couplet	
223/1–234/4	Theme of the refrain combined with personnages mélodiques	Recapitulation
234/5–238/20	Reprise of elements of the main theme	Coda

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Messiaen's writings rarely cover the formal aspect of his musical influences, there is substantial evidence of his thoughts in this area with regard to the music of Debussy and Ravel. Messiaen identifies in *La Mer* both sectional and sonata forms, and his views disagree with the approaches of other analysts (not surprisingly given the intense debate surrounding Debussy's forms).[33] Debussy's innovatory 'dissolution of formal boundaries in favour of a vague openness'[34] evidently impacted theoretically on one of his greatest admirers. In many of the hypothetical models in Table 2, the formal boundaries reflect Debussy's fluidity, and from Messiaen's perspective some of the designs are not always markedly dissimilar. Before we leave Debussy, mention should be made of Roy Howat's analyses linking form and proportion. Howat notes that Messiaen, in conversation with Roger Nichols, denied the presence of the Golden Section (GS) in his music, but that 'it might make an interesting project to investigate whether Messiaen's music nonetheless reveals any intuited GS patterns'.[35] While such a study would be beyond the scope of the present article, neither GS nor other proportional patterns, except for those resulting from mechanistic techniques, appear to be present in Messiaen's music. This is not especially startling: even when he adopts more traditional models, Messiaen's formal boundaries are often governed by the playing out of predestined ideas, or by a decision randomly to terminate theoretically infinite notions. Isolated or small-scale proportional patterns may possibly be observed, but such occurrences are more likely to be dictated by chance than by compositional choices.[36] Simon Trezise points out that in the first movement of *La Mer* 'the formal pattern that these clearly differentiated sections produce, ABCDE (!) [identical to the sectional form in Table 2], does not remotely recall a textbook norm'.[37] Of course, a number of the models in Table 2 are established forms, the general characteristics of which are retained despite Messiaen's manipulations.

Messiaen's general attitude towards Stravinsky's approach to form is extremely difficult to assess, given Messiaen's reluctance to comment on the subject. André Boucourechliev, in his survey of *The Rite of Spring*, draws attention to the discontinuity in the work's design and the lack of traditional formal elements. He goes on to identify how Stravinsky achieves unity in sectional form 'by means of general technical principles underlying all the music in the work, such as the elaboration of rhythmic cells and their asymmetrical variations, systems of superimposed harmonic aggregates, strongly polarized modal and tonal melody, the dialectic of concurrent rhythmic principles in several numbers, the principle of melodic and/or rhythmic *ostinato*'.[38] With the exception of tonal melodies, these observations have numerous resonances with the works covered in Table 2, irrespective of their formal grouping, and such a refined analyst as Messiaen would surely have been aware of these features in Stravinsky's work, whether or not they were discussed in his own analytical presentations.

33 Messiaen devotes the whole of the sixth volume of his *Traité* to the music of Debussy.
34 Trezise, *Debussy: La Mer*, 52.
35 Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 187.
36 Mathematically predetermined proportions are noticeable in the works of Messiaen's pupils Xenakis and Stockhausen (the latter employed the Fibonacci series in a number of works).
37 Trezise, *Debussy: La Mer*, 52.
38 Boucourechliev, *Stravinsky*, 73.

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Even in Messiaen's detailed analysis of *The Rite of Spring*, comments on large-scale structure are absent. However, for two of the models – alternate and sectional – the Stravinsky of the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* is the obvious reference point. Much has been made of the 'montage technique' (to use Louis Andriessen's terminology)[39] of the Stravinsky work, and there are both parallels and important differences when comparisons are made with Messiaen. The typically Stravinskian characteristics of non-development and extreme economy of material find a direct echo in the Messiaen alternate model. But Messiaen's sectional form is in general more complex than that of the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* owing to its integration of motivic, rhythmic, and harmonic development (albeit not in a strictly traditional sense) and an increased quantity of ideas. The sectional forms employed in *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (and other works based entirely on birdsong) achieve a sense of growth more through Messiaen's chronological representation of events in the natural world (as set out in the prefaces to his scores) than through purely musical means.

The Messiaen models that most obviously defy direct association with previous composers are those of superposition and single technique. Admittedly, these are not highly sophisticated terms, but they nevertheless accurately label the movements in question. Both models may have been prompted by the music Messiaen studied in his classes. The well-known instance of superposition in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (the 'Procession of the Sage') has similarities, but on this occasion the superposition is confined to a relatively brief passage and fails to play a large-scale structural role. Single technique form may be compared on a conceptual level with devices such as canon and fugue, in that the playing out of a theoretical, abstract process is the governing factor, although the subtleties of fugal writing are absent from Messiaen's rather obviously constructed single technique movements.

An uneasy relationship between inherited form and innovative technique can still be identified in the work of Messiaen's own pupils and successors. Of course, many twentieth-century composers (particularly those steeped in the French tradition) adapted sonata form for their own purposes, in much the same way as the Romantics had done a century earlier. But it is striking to see such adaptations in the work of avant-gardists such as Boulez. His Second Piano Sonata is a case in point: its serial basis precludes the kind of tonal plan emphasized by Hodeir. According to Dominique Jameux, the first movement does include an exposition, development, and recapitulation, but he comments that 'their implications are inevitably seriously weakened, because although serial organization has its own logic, it obviously does not correspond precisely to the logic resulting from the play of tonality over the distance traditionally defined as sonata form'.[40] Charles Rosen also observes the sonata elements in the same movement: '[It] has a clearly defined exposition [. . .] [which] contains easily recognizable first, second, and concluding themes. There is a development section, elements of recapitulation set in relief and a coda.'[41] Boulez may retain the framework of sonata form in the movement, but the thematic and tonal requirements are not fulfilled, and he has a preference for cellular rather than motivic development. Even though a

39 See Andriessen and Schönberger, *The Apollonian Clockwork*, 160–4.
40 Jameux, *Pierre Boulez*, 241.
41 Rosen, 'The Piano Music', 91.

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development section is present, Boulez develops new material rather than that of the exposition. There is fluidity in Boulez's sonata design, and the sonata form landmarks are far from immediately apparent.

Boulez appears to be rather ambivalent about Messiaen as a composer: without any obvious rationale, he has been willing to engage with certain of his works while completely disregarding others. Despite his vehement criticism of Messiaen's *Turangalîla-Symphonie* and his apparently scathing assessment of his teacher in general – 'he does not compose – he juxtaposes'[42] – Boulez has expressed his interest in a range of Messiaen's works from the 1930s to the 1980s, both in print and as a conductor.[43] Of the works he has either conducted or recorded, the majority fall into the sectional form category, the most notable exceptions being *Sept haïkaï* and *Des Canyons aux Étoiles*. Although the forms located in Messiaen's own music are unlikely to have influenced Boulez directly, the insights Messiaen gave into the music of Debussy, Stravinsky, and Berg, among others, undoubtedly played a role in prompting Boulez's formal researches. In particular, Messiaen's analytical classes of the 1940s surely had a bearing on Boulez's willingness to manipulate sonata form and adapt it for his own purposes. It is interesting to note that Messiaen and Boulez both composed their last works adhering to sonata principles – 'Joie du sang des étoiles' and Second Piano Sonata, respectively – in 1948. The appearance in the following year of Messiaen's 'Mode de valeurs et d'intensités' signalled a new direction for both composers, one in which sonata form had no role, and this work is significant in Messiaen's output because of its lack of any discernible form outside its technical process.

Hodeir's criticism of the 'ultra-static character' of Messiaen's music may be addressed by returning to the fifth movement of the *Turangalîla-Symphonie*. Retention of sonata form elements in this movement allows Messiaen to create a semblance of momentum and goal-directedness; the rhythmic and harmonic intensification of material dictated by sonata landmarks by which he achieves this is absent from many of his other structures. The combination of structure and technique produces a result far removed from a straightforward sense of stasis (see Table 3 for details). However, this movement is not representative of Messiaen's output as a whole; rather than rejecting Hodeir's diagnosis, it would perhaps be pertinent to question whether Hodeir is right to view stasis as a fatal defect. A sense of timelessness is often a declared aim of Messiaen's work, as it is a musical reflection of the never-ending nature of God.[44] Even in pieces that are not overtly religious, a static element is often retained, and Hodeir possibly did not appreciate the theological connotations, a topic he chose not to discuss.

Hodeir may have a point when he comments on Messiaen's penchant for 'formal clichés'. The two element model identified in Table 2 is undoubtedly one of Messiaen's more limited

42 Boulez, *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 49.

43 See Boulez's comments on Messiaen as an analyst in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship* (47–50), the fulsome tribute in *Orientations* (404–20), and his recordings for Deutsche Grammophon (*Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*, *Chronochromie*, *La Ville d'en haut*, DG 445 827–2; *Poèmes pour Mi*, *Le Réveil des oiseaux*, *Sept haïkaï*, DG 453 478–2), Erato (*Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*, *Couleurs de la Cité Célèste*, 4509–91706–2), and Montaigne (*Sept haïkaï*, *Couleurs de la Cité Célèste*, *Un vitrail et des oiseaux*, *Oiseaux exotiques*, MO 782131).

44 This aspect of Messiaen's work is discussed in Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, 15–18.

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designs, as it consists of a high degree of often undeveloped repetition. Issues may also be raised with sectional form, and indeed this may be viewed as not being a formal category at all. As highlighted in the discussion of the *Vingt regards* and *Turangalîla-Symphonie* above, sections of material are placed one after another with no obvious rationale. However, Messiaen was not the first to work in this way: the majority of the works of Varèse (whose music Messiaen greatly admired) are composed in a similarly sectional manner. As Malcolm MacDonald observes: 'Varèse's works [are episodic] insofar as they reject the strong thematic and tonal patterning of sonata and other classically-derived forms, and rely instead on the dramatic succession of contrasting musical events.'[45] Examining a work of Varèse that has only a limited amount of musical contrast, such as *Ionisation*, Chou Wen-Chung takes an analytical approach in which texture and timbre are viewed as the motivating factors in essentially sectional form.[46] This would occasionally be pertinent in Messiaen, for example in the first movement of the *Turangalîla-Symphonie*, but sectional divisions in his music are more commonly identifiable by changes of technique or imagery. It is in the music of Iannis Xenakis (one of Messiaen's most distinguished pupils) that this type of sectionalized design based on texture, timbre, and instrumentation is more fully exploited.

In fact, sectional form exemplifies the interconnectedness of the hypothetical models. Two of the *Vingt regards* (numbers ten and eleven) are in sectional form, but they do not suffer from 'disorder'. They have been placed in this category primarily because of their clearly defined sections, with each revolving around a distinct musical or non-musical concept. It would nevertheless also be plausible to place both pieces in the sonata form category. Their internal organization is shown in Table 4. Although these pieces operate within sonata landmarks, they are more compartmentalized than those placed in the sonata form category in Table 2 (for example, they do not have the same sense of continual development as 'Joie du sang des étoiles'), so that the sectional form label remains the more appropriate one.

Form as such may have not been one of Messiaen's principal areas of innovation or investigation, and it is certainly less significant to his aesthetic than the domains of rhythm and harmony. His relative avoidance of the topic makes it an underexplored area of his compositional thinking. However, as Table 2 illustrates, it is possible to reduce the apparent 'disorder' of his formal procedures to ten favoured categories. Although there is a speculative element involved in this, these categories assist in producing a more rounded picture of Messiaen the composer, and in assessing the validity of structural criticisms. They also allow his myriad techniques to be viewed in a more orderly light.

Messiaen's handling of form shows his awareness of a variety of frameworks employed by his predecessors and an ability to integrate 'traditional' structures into his developing musical language. The marked concentration on his rhythmic and harmonic innovations in the literature to date may indeed mask the relative conservatism of his large-scale structural thinking; but to level the kind of one-sided criticism penned by Hodeir is unjust (and not

45 Macdonald, *Varèse: Astronomer in Sound*, 111.
46 Chou, '*Ionisation*: the Function of Timbre in its Formal and Temporal Organization'.

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Table 4 The internal organization of Messiaen, *Vingt regards* nos 10 and 11

Page/bar nos	Structural outline
10 'Regard de l'Esprit de joie'	
60/1–60/6	Exposition (Theme)
60/7–63/10	Transition ('Theme of Joy', Assymetric augmentation)
63/11–72/7	Development ('Hunting Theme', 'Theme of Joy', 'Theme of God', 'Theme of Joy')
72/8–75/5	Recapitulation (Theme)
75/6–76/11	Coda
11 'Première communion de la Vierge'	
77/1–79/1	Exposition ('Theme of God', Quote)
79/2–83/2	Development (Variation of 'Theme of God', Harmonization of D, 'Heartbeat')
83/3–83/6	Recapitulation ('Theme of God')
83/7–83/8	Coda

untypical of his liking for wild generalization). Far from being Messiaen's 'downfall', the composer's use and manipulation of established structural designs was admirably suited to his artistic purpose, and as orderly as we should expect from such a self-aware 'eminent technician [. . .] erudite and discerning analyst'.

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