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# Review article

## A Very British Modernism? A Review of Hugh Wood, *Staking Out the Territory and Other Writings on Music*, ed. Christopher Wintle (London: Plumbago, 2007), ISBN 978-0-9556087-0-4 (hb), 978-0-9556087-1-1 (pb)

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In March 2008 a review by the British composer Hugh Wood (*b* 1932) of five books on Elgar prompted a short flurry of letters both pro and contra his views; his subsequent exchanges with Richard Taruskin drew the debate out for over a month.[1] Both sides took exception to what they perceived as 'stereotyped nationalist vices' and disagreed over notions of a valid musicological approach.[2] Taruskin accused Wood of thinking of musicology solely as a 'service discipline' to 'enhance the reputation of composers like him' or to aid performers – any approach that sought to do otherwise would, Taruskin suggested, be seen by Wood as 'an upstart to be swatted down'.[3] Prior to that Wood had accused Taruskin of 'random, all-purpose, indiscriminate abuse' and, with it, a failure to identify 'what type of second-rateness in [the Elgar] books' he was 'intent on protecting'; less still did Taruskin offer any thoughts on Elgar or his music.[4]

The reason for recounting this minor contretemps is to draw attention to the contrasting, if not mutually exclusive, discourses that shaped it. At stake here are those often unspoken validating strategies that determine what music is, how it can be discussed meaningfully, and how it might be experienced. Wood's review upholds the virtue of writing that mutually illuminates the music and the context in which it occurs. Praising Diana McVeagh's *Elgar the Music Maker*,[5] he notes that '[n]o biographical fact appears unless it is directly related to Elgar's music; no piece is discussed without consideration of its context. [. . .] There is no superimposition of alien theories or of special interests, and there are no perverse reinterpretations.'[6] It is clear, though, that this relationship of music and 'context' is not as transparent as Wood might suppose. What are the frameworks that enable one to 'directly relate' music and context, and how can one reliably differentiate these from 'alien theories', 'special interests', and 'perverse reinterpretations'? For Taruskin, Wood's distinctions rest upon no more than 'defensive insularity, anti-intellectualism, know-it-all complacency, proud ignorance [and] blimpish spite'.[7] Though Wood (by virtue of his sometimes splenetic censure) leaves himself open to accusations of a wilfully prejudiced engagement with alternative scholarly traditions, Taruskin for his part neglects to deal with the specifics of Wood's argument. With each alienated from the other's position, and equally unwilling to discuss the reasons for this estrangement, stalemate was inevitable.

1 Hugh Wood, 'Serenade in B', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 March 2008, pp. 3–5.
2 See the letters to the *Times Literary Supplement* by Richard Taruskin, 4 and 25 April 2008 (both p. 6), and the response to the former by Peter Williams, 18 April 2008, p. 6.
3 Taruskin, letter to *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 April 2008, p. 6.
4 Wood, letter to *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 April 2008, p. 6.
5 Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007).
6 Wood, 'Serenade in B', 5.
7 Taruskin, letter to *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 April 2008, p. 6.

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A rounded understanding of Wood's position requires a broader historical perspective. Wood belongs to the generation of composers born in the 1930s whose music and writings, represented above all by the example of the 'Manchester School', came to define the distinctive British response to twentieth-century modernism that first emerged in the late 1950s. 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be a young composer was very heaven.'[8] Paul Griffiths's invocation of Wordsworth when writing of these years is noteworthy, for it captures not only the sense of a bygone 'golden age' but also the fact that this manifestation of British modernism was shaped by a conscious (and self-conscious) attitude towards the past, which recognized its roots in European culture whilst simultaneously casting its nets both further back and further afield. Benefiting greatly from institutional support, 'British Modernist music was', according to Andrew Blake, 'itself part of the heroic culture of the 1960s, during which a self-proclaimed radical avant-garde forced its way into the Establishment'.[9] Entrance into the Establishment brought with it greater opportunity to inform public opinion, through (for example) radio broadcasts and lectures and positions within academia; with it too came respected roles in the community and, within a couple of decades, knighthoods and, for Davies, a royal appointment. Griffiths has suggested that 'Alexander Goehr and Peter Maxwell Davies, the *enfants terribles* of 1963, are now the doyens. And though they might not relish the role of father figure, it was indeed their example, and that of their Manchester colleague, Harrison Birtwistle, that helped stimulate the great growth of British music during the last twenty years.' [10] This was written in 1985, but already by then there were signs of change. In a review of 1993 David Fanning wrote of Goehr and Wood: 'how historical they now seem, how distant in their earnest complexities from the values of today's musical scene, which may of course be precisely their strength, if you take the view that most recent contemporary music has sold its soul to commercialism.'[11] Fanning's stance was indicative of the sense that Goehr and Wood's brand of British modernism[12] was losing whatever centrality it could once claim, beset by the rallying cries of increasing pluralism and notions of contemporary 'relevance'.

A comprehensive history of this manifestation of British musical modernism – its entry into and consolidation within the Establishment and its subsequent loss of centrality – has yet to be written. Nevertheless, hints of the story can be found in the writings of figures such as Wood, Goehr, and Davies. These writings provide glimpses into their backgrounds and

8 Paul Griffiths, *New Sounds, New Personalities: British Composers of the 1980s* (London: Faber Music, 1985), 10.

9 Andrew Blake, *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 4–5. Elsewhere Blake notes more negatively that the 1950s to the 1970s was a period in which 'the music of a very few was increasingly imposed on an unwilling many' (62).

10 Griffiths, *New Sounds, New Personalities*, 9.

11 David Fanning, 'Such Distant Memories', *The Independent*, 6 March 1993.

12 The term 'British modernism' – at least when applied solely to the 1930s generation of composers – is perhaps now somewhat controversial. A growing body of scholarship is dedicated to the exploration of pre-Second World War responses to the challenges posed by modernism. See, for instance, Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922–36: Shaping a Nation's Tastes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism 1895–1960* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

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formative experiences, their relationships to tradition and culture, their values, and their views on cultural developments – in short, the foundations of their musical discourse and the discursive practices that shaped it. Given the dominance of the Manchester School in literature up to this point,[13] the present selection of Hugh Wood's writings is welcome, for it gathers together the majority of his most significant essays and reviews, and makes available for the first time certain broadcasts from the 1970s. Wood's most personal writings can be found in the opening section: four articles on what it means to be a composer and teacher, gathered under the heading of the volume's title, 'Staking Out the Territory'; two on 'Finding Your Own Voice'; four on 'Thinking about Composers'; and five 'Memories and Tributes' to composers and analysts. Twenty essays drawn from programme notes and nine taken from reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement* follow. The tone is instantly recognizable, capturing something of what Meirion Bowen has characterized as Wood's 'Beleagured Gruff Mood', a manner simultaneously undercut by sardonic humour and ambivalence towards his own arguments.[14] While Bayan Northcott, in his preface, sees the writings as offering a 'self-portrait' of the composer (xii), they also reveal much about the cultural environment in which he lived and worked.

In what follows I shall examine Wood's volume alongside writings of his contemporaries, notably Goehr and Davies, in terms of three principal themes:[15] first, the formative experiences of the authors and their relationship to their musical environment; second, the ways in which they came to legitimize their responses to modernism; and third, the ways in which their writings bear witness to the loss of centrality of British modernism within musical life. Such stock-taking not only offers valuable insights into the history, aesthetics, and shaping factors behind a crucial period of British music but also raises important questions concerning tradition and cultural 'authority'.

13 Unsurprisingly, the Manchester School dominates the literature. Collections about the music and writings of Alexander Goehr include Bayan Northcott (ed.), *The Music of Alexander Goehr: Interviews and Articles* (London: Schott, 1980); Neil Boynton, 'Alexander Goehr: a Checklist of His Writings and Broadcast Talks', *Music Analysis* 11/2–3 (1992), 201–8; Alexander Goehr, *Finding the Key: Selected Writings*, ed. Derrick Puffett (London: Faber and Faber, 1998); and Alison Latham (ed.), *Sing, Ariel: Essays and Thoughts for Alexander Goehr's Seventieth Birthday* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). Davies's music has been explored in, among others, Stephen Pruslin (ed.), *Peter Maxwell Davies: Studies from Two Decades*, Tempo Booklet no. 2 (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1979); Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London: Robson, 1982); Colin Bayliss, *The Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies* (London: Highgate, 1991); and Richard McGregor (ed.), *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). Those on Birtwistle include two books by Michael Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle* (London: Robson Books, 1984) and *Harrison Birtwistle in Recent Years* (London: Robson Books, 1998); Jonathan Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000); and Robert Adlington, *The Music of Harrison Birtwistle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

14 Meirion Bowen, 'David Matthews at 50', *The Guardian*, 10 April 1993.

15 Such a stance might appear to contradict my statement that 'Wood's cosmopolitanism has always been significantly different to that of the Manchester group'; *The Music of Hugh Wood* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 1. Such distinctions are relative, however. As I shall argue in this review article, there are many commonalities of thinking to be found in the writings of Wood, Goehr, and Davies, even if the individual ways in which they realize such ideas musically differ widely.

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## I

While Goehr offers detailed descriptions of his musical education, Wood's formative musical experiences emerge only in passing in his writings.[16] Nor do we have for Wood anything approaching a full biography, as we have for Davies.[17] Instead, *Staking Out the Territory* offers fragmentary insights into Wood's musical education and career, which turn out to be different in certain respects from those of his Manchester School contemporaries, reflecting neither the privileged musical opportunities available to Goehr nor the working-class backgrounds of Davies and Birtwistle. There are memories of works heard and loved: a recording of Elgar heard over tea on a garden terrace shortly before the Second World War (40); an early experience of contemporary British music, again via recordings, when his elder brother introduced him to Walton (174); and Brahms's Violin Concerto heard whilst on National Service in a barracks (61). We read of Wood's feelings of isolation when, as a student of modern history at Oxford, he was given scant help and support from the music faculty (3–4), a situation comparable to the experience of Davies at Manchester University.[18] Wood's perennial anxieties about his status as a late starter (9) help to foster the image of an outsider.[19] Yet he is also something of an insider, as is suggested by his references to his work as a university lecturer at Liverpool and Cambridge;[20] the very nature of this collection of broadcasts, articles, programme notes, and reviews provides evidence of the position of esteem he has attained. Through the writings, however, what emerges especially is the pivotal role that summer schools have played in his musical life. It was at a summer school, during a recital of French piano music, that he decided to make his career as a musician (9).[21] An encounter with Stravinsky (65), performances of Dallapiccola (67), an Elgar-loving former ambassador to Italy (4) – such anecdotes are indicative of the richness of musical life, both in concert and in social and cultural terms, that Wood experienced. A passing reference to the Wardour Castle Summer School, where Wood was on the teaching staff with Goehr, Davies, and Birtwistle (5), requires amplification in Wood's contribution to a Goehr Festschrift for us to understand its importance in Wood's life.[22] The image, fragmentary and at times coloured by nostalgia as it

16 Accounts of Goehr's education can be found in a clutch of essays in the collection *Finding the Key:* 'A Letter to Boulez' (1–26), 'Manchester Years' (27–41), 'The Messiaen Class' (42–57), and 'Finding the Key' (272–303).

17 The fullest biography of Davies to date is Mike Seabrook's *Max: the Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1994). For sketches of Wood's formative experiences and his subsequent career, see Venn, *The Music of Hugh Wood*.

18 See also, for instance, Nicholas Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies in the 1950s: a Conversation', *Tempo* 254 (2010), 11–19.

19 Although this sense of being on the outside defines in part Wood's relationship with British musical institutions, one ought to be wary of making as emphatic a claim as 'Wood prefers to remain in most ways alienated'; Whittall, 'Cold Comfort Balm', *Musical Times* 149 (Autumn 2008), 116–18 (118).

20 In 'Staking Out the Territory', dating from 1973, Wood writes 'until recently I would have [said] "I'm a University Lecturer"' (9). At this point he had just left the University of Liverpool, and elsewhere in the volume (41) we hear of his musical experiences there. The 1980 article 'Teachers and Pupils' (14–16) relates to Wood's teaching at Cambridge University, where he was appointed Lecturer in Music and Fellow of Churchill College in 1977. Wood had earlier been Crumb Research Fellow at Glasgow University (1966–70).

21 Although Wood does not specify this in the text, the summer school in question was the first held at Bryanston in 1948 (it was relocated to Dartington five years later).

22 Hugh Wood, 'On Music of Conviction . . . and an Enduring Friendship', in *Sing, Ariel*, ed. Latham, 327–30 (328).

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is, is of a musical upbringing characterized by increasing chances to hear a great variety of music, both live and recorded, and by unparalleled opportunities for young composers to experience and participate in musical life. For a generation born into a broadly conservative and inward-looking musical culture, such freedom must have been exhilarating.

From this perspective the role of William Glock was critical. Not only did he establish the Bryanston (later Dartington) Summer School, which played such a key role in Wood's (and others') development, but after his appointment in 1959 as the Controller of BBC Music he was able to oversee innovative programming.[23] It is noteworthy that Alexander Goehr, listing in 1987 some of what he felt to be the highlights of British concert life, drew heavily on examples belonging to the 1960s and early 70s:

> Barenboim's series of Mozart Piano Concertos with the English Chamber Orchestra some 15 years ago; Boulez's performances of early 20th-century classics with the BBC; [. . .] and the vivacity of some of the Prom seasons planned by William Glock, were all examples of the way memorable musical experiences could be achieved under existing, rather than ideal circumstances.[24]

Davies too has drawn attention to 'splendid encounters with Stockhausen, Cage, Boulez and others when the BBC Promenade Concerts were under William Glock's direction, where one could believe, perhaps, that they demonstrated convincingly the way new music would turn in the future', even if he felt that the audience was unable or unwilling to be appreciative of such splendours.[25] Characteristic of this programming was a heady blend of old and new music amidst more traditional repertory.[26] In this way concert-goers, including young composers, were exposed to a broad range of music: little wonder that these formative encounters were to lead the new generation to locate 'authority' and 'tradition' in canons different from those of their predecessors.[27] Influential were not only the types of in-depth discussion that would have taken place amongst 'the younger radicals' in hotbeds of activity such as 'various colleges of music and summer schools',[28] but also the ideas and techniques displayed in these wide-ranging programmes, which would have deepened the historical sense of the composers in question and given them a pool of ideas for developing technique and musical values.

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23 Goehr and Wood knew Glock from (among other places) the Dartington Summer Schools; Glock was also editor of the influential journal *The Score*.

24 Alexander Goehr, 'The Survival of the Symphony: 3. Past and Present', *The Listener*, 3 December 1987, pp. 25–30 (30).

25 Davies, 'Will Serious Music Become Extinct?' (Royal Philharmonic Society Lecture, 24 April 2005), <http://www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk/?page=lectures/rpsLectures/> (accessed 03 February 2009).

26 Noting the wide range of composers included in programmes during Glock's regime, Goehr has stated that 'William Glock did as much for Haydn and Schubert as he did for Stravinsky and Boulez'; 'Guest Editorial', *Musical Times* 135 (1994), 610–11 (611).

27 As I argue below, the models at first were Stravinsky and Schoenberg, coloured by particular responses to older historical traditions. Of course, such a generalization overlooks the specific ways in which composers responded to these sources, and is not intended to mask the ways in which the trajectories of individual careers radiated out from this starting point: these too are touched on later in this article.

28 Arnold Whittall, 'British Music in the Modern World', in *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stephen Banfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 9–26 (18).

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Also unlike Goehr and Davies, Wood did not study abroad. Nevertheless, the writings of all three demonstrate a shared disapproval of the conservatism of British musical institutions and the concert-going public in the 1950s.[29] Davies's 1956 article 'The Young British Composer' lamented those English musicians who aspired to continue a 'nonexistent "national" tradition', the notion of which served to mask 'lazy, unconstructive thought – defeatism, almost, in the face of recent developments, all hidden under a protective banner of Britishness, conservatism or "taste"'.[30] Three years later Davies returned to the same theme with relish:

> I suspect the English have been living in a fool's paradise, in complete ignorance of recent and even distant musical developments. [. . .] There is no longer any place for nationalism in music: our problems are fundamental, general, international. A composer who is preoccupied with being English, or any other nationality, [. . .] when national folk music has become a mummy embalmed in the collector's tape-recordings, is guilty of violating a corpse.[31]

The public and sometimes combative way in which this generation of composers, spearheaded by the Manchester School, challenged and transformed the prevailing musical culture has done much to promote the image of the late 1950s and 1960s as a time of heroic change. Writing in 1961, Wood characterized Davies and his peers thus:

> in spite of the composer's declared and obvious independence of any English sources of the recent past (in which he is typical of his generation), he is nevertheless involved on a deeper level with our native traditions. But it also suggests – to look now at the future – that this close contact with continental trends, based on intelligent awareness mingled with discerning scepticism, provides a possible and fruitful course for our music to take during the next thirty years.[32]

It is clear, therefore, that 'something was in the air', and not just in Manchester.[33] Wood, perhaps, has come up with the most eloquent testimony to the burgeoning culture of this

29 I have already noted Wood and Davies's negative encounters with British musical institutions in the 1950s (which no doubt contributed to the tenor of their arguments); Goehr's reminiscences from the vantage-point of 1990 were of a gentler order, but they still reveal the inherent conservatism of that time (see Goehr, 'Manchester Years').

30 Peter Maxwell Davies, 'The Young British Composer', *The Score* 16 (1956), 84–5 (85). Davies has recently commented on the combative style of his early articles; the aggressiveness of the tone reflects his disgust that 'the establishment [. . .] was blocking so much that was interesting' (Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies in the 1950s', 14). Retrospect also appears to have softened the stance towards national and folk music – 'I didn't feel so antagonistic towards those writing in the "established" musical world, such as Ben Britten or Vaughan Williams' (16) – though, of course, the composer of *Orkney Wedding with Sunrise* could today hardly say otherwise.

31 Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Problems of a British Composer Today', *The Listener*, 8 October 1959, pp. 563–4 (563).

32 Hugh Wood, 'English Contemporary Music', in *European Music in the 20th Century*, ed. Howard Hartog, 2nd edn (London: Pelican Books, 1961), 145–70 (170). This essay does not appear in *Staking out the Territory*; comments made in certain articles included in the collection indicate that the author has distanced himself from at least some of the opinions expressed in it. Of course, the distance Davies felt to his immediate past may have been overstated at this time too: see note 30.

33 Alexander Goehr lists some of the musical reasons for this shift in taste and the emerging prominence of modernism in his 'Guest Editorial'; the roots of this shift are located in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

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period. Writing of Wardour Castle, but with his thoughts radiating out to all that it represented, he opined that

> [p]erhaps the final manifestation of the Manchester troika was their joint participation in the Wardour Castle Summer Schools of 1964 and 1965. The spectacles through which one views the past often become tinted with rose. Nevertheless (and I think anyone who was there would agree) this succession of frantic days amid idyllic surroundings provided an experience hard to come by anywhere today: its idealism and optimism were entirely typical of the 1960s and have vanished with them.[34]

The discourse surrounding British modernism (in this incarnation) was forged in the crucible of 1950s and 60s institutions, such as Dartington and the BBC after Glock's appointment; such institutions also provided opportunities and outlets for its perpetuation. Distinguishing itself from the perceived inward nationalism and conservatism of the universities and music colleges, British modernism prided itself on the importance of good, historically aware technique. For those who were able to benefit from such 'idealism and optimism' these must have been stimulating times indeed. There were those, though, for whom the atmosphere of the 1960s was 'oppressive'; far from offering opportunities in abundance, the avant-garde in both its European and British manifestations provided instead 'restrictions and taboos the more potent for being mysterious'.[35] The 'golden age' of the 1960s, then, with its limited prospects for performance or broadcast outside the few established bodies and relatively few training opportunities that would enable young composers to take advantage of them, created new exclusionary practices with which to replace the old.

## II

The new wave of British modernism could not rely solely on setting itself apart from nationalism and conservatism. Discursive practices that were designed to validate both music and thoughts about music emerged. A canon of authoritative works was established, serving in part to help define 'musical thought' (or 'musical experience') in this context. Moreover, this canon was vouchsafed by virtue of its ethical value, thus imparting to British modernism its own moral dimension.

Although Goehr has written that 'in the 1950s there seemed to be an enormous gulf between London, Paris and New York and our provincial world',[36] the 1950s and 60s saw increasing opportunities for provincial composers (whether geographically or intellectually so defined) to engage with progressive, radical, and internationalist trends – so long as they had access to the right circles. Shaped by such encounters, British modernism came to define its identity, characterized by the way in which it positioned itself not only towards both the

34 Wood, 'On Music of Conviction', 328.

35 Robin Holloway, 'The 1960s', in *Essays and Diversions II* (London: Continuum, 2007), 235–6 (235).

36 Goehr, 'Manchester Years', 32.

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immediate and the historical past but also towards Darmstadt.[37] Goehr, Davies, and Wood all attended Darmstadt during the 1950s, and all three found the prevailing aesthetic to be inimical to their own identifications with tradition.[38] Certainly, the responses of these three composers were congruent to a greater or lesser extent with Arnold Whittall's observations that twentieth-century Britain was 'characterized at least as much by a resistance to radicalized modernity as by an embrace of it' and that 'British musical life found an appropriate place for modernism in British compositions at the appropriate time: that is, later rather than sooner'.[39] In particular, the '1960s "revolution" was more a matter of destabilizing a prevailing conservatism than sweeping it away in order to welcome the avant garde into its kingdom'.[40]

It is in this light – and with an awareness of 'the new spirit of liberalism, or permissiveness'[41] that allowed it to flourish – that we can understand British musical modernism. Whilst British composers were sympathetic to certain technical and expressive ideals being developed on the continent at this time, there was a simultaneous (re)discovery of the modernist music of the first half of the twentieth century (as well as the need to come to terms with the 'strong and independent identity' that British music had established for itself in the guise of Vaughan Williams, Holst, and others).[42] In particular, the arrival in Britain, as a result of the Third Reich, of a group of composers and scholars who might be said to belong to the 'Schoenberg tradition' made possible a connection with European traditions of the recent past that (at least in more cosmopolitan eyes) had previously been absent from British musical culture.[43] One such individual was Hans Keller, who according to Wood 'taught a whole generation of us', providing a link to 'a world of musical sensibility that has now

37 Goehr suggests that '[t]he search for self-identification, for a tradition within which to work, is a recurring motif in the consciousness of the English artist'; 'Tippett at Sixty', *Musical Times*, 106 (1965), 22–4 (22). In the same year Davies suggests that such a search may well be characteristic of a number of cultures, for the young American composer 'does not know which way to turn to define himself against his inherited tradition, owing to the subtle nature of a tradition that has it "both ways"'; Davies, 'The Young Composer in America', *Tempo* 72, 2–6 (5).

38 Whether or not this 'prevailing aesthetic' was an accurate reflection of Darmstadt at this time is historically but not artistically relevant: it was crucial for the self-identification of many British artists at the time; see *Contemporary Music Review* 26/1 (2007): 'Other Darmstadts', ed. Paul Attinello, Christopher Fox, and Martin Iddon, and in particular Christopher Fox's 'Darmstadt and the Institutionalisation of Modernism', 115–23.

39 Whittall, 'British Music', 11.

40 Whittall, 'British Music', 19. Whittall's comments make most sense when viewed from the vantage-point of the present. During the 1960s a composer like Davies would have seemed to offer far less 'resistance to radicalised modernity' than his synthesis of traditional and progressive trends from the 1970s onwards would now have us believe. See also Robin Holloway's description of the 'continuing or reconstructed mainstream, remarkably wide and various, but all of it cognizant of, and taking [. . .] some consequences from the radicalism that precedes it, and by no means necessarily averse to that with which it is simultaneous'; 'An Overview: Twentieth-Century (Lite) Blues', in *Essays and Diversions II* (London: Continuum, 2007), 239–53 (243).

41 Whittall, 'British Music', 19.

42 Whittall, 'British Music', 11.

43 For instance, not so long before, when composers of the 1930s generation were in their infancy, it is likely that Britten had been prevented from studying with Berg on the grounds that the latter was 'not a good influence'; see Britten, *Letters from a Life: Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten,* vol. 1: *1923–39*, ed. Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 395.

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disappeared' (73, 76).[44] Just as the English Music Renaissance of the first half of the twentieth century sought to legitimize itself by situating itself against historical (i.e. Tudor) and geographic (i.e. the English countryside) models,[45] so too the modernist's (re)connection to the European mainstream brought with it the opportunity to (re)assert and validate particular musical beliefs.[46]

If the techniques, values, and modes of expression of the Second Viennese School formed one coordinate for British musical modernism, the music of Stravinsky offered a model for the creative (mis)use of music of the past; in both cases the British responses to these composers were of an intensity and scale unparalleled in the interwar years. While the two composers may have formed in Western art music the 'two great antipodes of modern music' since the 1920s, Wood has emphasized the more local impact of Stravinsky's work of 1952–3 – with its serial turn – on 'many of us unregenerate modernists' (201). Just at the point that Schoenberg and Stravinsky ceased to be relevant to many continental composers, Stravinsky offered a fruitful accommodation between the antipodes that proved a stimulus to the emerging generation in Britain.[47] One needs only a casual acquaintance with the music of Goehr, Davies, Birtwistle, and Wood to realize just how indebted they were, in their individual ways, to both Schoenberg and Stravinsky; in a distinguished recent study Kenneth Gloag has demonstrated how a similar turn to early modernism (and late Romanticism) characterizes the music of their peer Nicholas Maw.[48]

Early twentieth-century modernism offered more to the emerging generation of British composers than just expressive, technical, and formal models: both Goehr and Davies have drawn attention to its ethical dimension. For Davies, writing in the early years of British modernism, it was a question of artistic morality: if Schoenberg had not followed the consequences of his expressive necessity into atonality, he would 'have been immoral in the deepest sense of the word – artistically immoral, in that he would have attempted to perpetuate a certain moment in musical history beyond the time in which it was

44 Robin Holloway, whilst acknowledging Keller's important role in British musical life in the post-war years, offers a far less hagiographic portrait; 'Keller's Causes', in *Essays and Diversions: 1963–2003* (London: Continuum, 2003), 404–13.

45 See, for instance, Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860–1940: Construction and Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1993).

46 Compare this with Dai Griffiths's somewhat more caustic reading of 'grammar schoolboy music', which 'finds its legitimation in music history, continuing a deep obsession in British musical thinking, crucially mediated through post-war America, with the music of middle Europe'; Griffiths, 'On Grammar Schoolboy Music', in *Music, Culture, and Society: a Reader*, ed. Derek B. Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 143–5 (144).

47 William Glock's recognition that 'we are beginning to see that it is Schoenberg and Stravinsky, above all, who have defined the crisis of contemporary music and of the contemporary spirit without fear or compromise' ('Comment', *The Score* 6 (1952), 3) has been described by Whittall ('British Music', 18) as 'the seeds of a modernist manifesto'; the echoes of this statement resound in Wood's comments.

48 Kenneth Gloag, *Nicholas Maw:* Odyssey (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). Writing of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Gloag suggests that 'the avant-garde, and its own historicization through the ageing process, also became something the young composer could intentionally and constructively react against. As Maw later recalled: "The particular style that prevailed when I was beginning in the 1950s – the Darmstadt version of the post-Viennese school – was one that rejected too much of the past for my temperament"' (6).

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valid'.[49] The terms of this argument – relying on a dubious teleology – would doubtless be rejected by the more pluralist Davies of today, but it is indicative of the extent to which he and his peers were (at that time) attempting to carve out a space for themselves, validating music and thoughts about music in both historical and ethical terms.

Similar themes, if less forcibly expressed, can be found in later writings. Goehr, writing in 1979, suggests that '[m]odernism might be seen as embodying a kind of moral stance, a philosophical position, as opposed to any concern with the contemporary, the merely new, at any particular time. Modernism may be seen as representing a philosophy which says that an individual experience, an individual perception of truth, is to be set above the collective values of society.'[50] Implicit in this is a critique of those post-World War II modernists – spectres of Darmstadt here – for whom innovation was paramount, but at the same time there are hints of praise for composers such as Schoenberg who pursue their own artistic trajectory (without, we must note, assertions of historical inevitability). Wood has tended to write admiringly of composers such as Mahler, Schoenberg, and Dallapiccola who embody the moral, philosophical, and artistic virtues of early modernism. Of Dallapiccola Wood states that '[t]he artist in him has never forgotten the citizen. He is concerned with public matters, with political events and problems, with captivity for conscience's sake, and with the possibility and the ecstasy of human freedom. [. . .] His music has seriousness and integrity and – it's such an English word, I'm afraid – *decency*' (68). Thus, in contrast to the continental avant-garde, British composers of the 1930s generation found new ways to engage with the moral and historicizing pressures of early modernism, and, in doing so, appropriated both moral and traditional values for their own music.[51]

The use of quotation and allusion was a further means by which composers of this generation grappled with the challenges of modernism (taking their steer, no doubt, from early twentieth-century precedents). Davies has drawn frequently on stylistic and historical allusions for expressive purpose or period flavour, noting that when his own musical processes collide with pre-existing material, the possibility arises of 'very interesting results'.[52] But it is Wood who has written most on the issue. In a 1974 article in *Tempo* and a broadcast from around 1970 he outlined the variety of ways in which composers might make creative use of the past in their own music.[53] The 'distortion of ironically intended or psychologically motivated comment' or 'creative reconstructions in the composer's own terms', such as are found in Davies, constitute one such way (18). Another, and one that can be found frequently in Wood's own music, is to use a quotation 'at a vital moment of the structure to make a particular point'; such quotations 'should have a double character, should be both public and private at the same time, have a strictly musical function *and* a hidden significance too. [. . .] I do recognize them as a way of saluting the past, even of commenting upon it.' (23)

49 Davies, 'Problems of a British Composer Today', 564.

50 Alexander Goehr, 'Modern Music and Its Society', in *Finding the Key*, 77–101 (95).

51 Gloag, *Maw:* Odyssey, 2.

52 Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Sets or Series', *The Listener*, 22 February 1968, p. 250.

53 See the essays 'Thoughts on a Modern Quartet' (17–20) and 'May I Quote You?' (21–3).

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Wood acknowledges the similarities between such salutations and those that can be found in Berg's *Lyric Suite* and Strauss's *Metamorphosen*: in these cases he notes that the aim is to 'define the composer's attitude towards not only *a* tradition, but towards Tradition itself' (22). He would doubtless agree with the observation from Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music*, cited by Goehr, that '[a] real tradition is not the relic of a past that is irretrievably gone; it is a living force that animates and informs the present'.[54] The corollary of this, Goehr suggests, is that '[m]odern music is only comprehensible in terms of the past'. Here he is referring to the failure of modern music to 'generate its own teaching materials'.[55] For Davies, an understanding of the complexities of past music is vital for composers of the present.[56] Once again we can draw attention to the way in which British modernism can be legitimized by turning to the past, and in particular the first half of the twentieth century, as an authority. This dialectic between past and present echoes those between individual and society, Schoenberg and Stravinsky, and radicalization and moderation. In all these cases the British musical modernism that emerged in the 1960s and is embodied in these writings can be best understood less as a mediation between such extremes and more as the simultaneous retention of both perspectives, with the consequent and fruitful exploration of the tensions between them.

## III

By the late 1960s the 1930s generation of composers was reaching its prime (at least in terms of those works that had the largest critical impact). Accounts of this period tend to identify the end of the sixties as a highwater mark in British musical life. For Whittall, 'British musical life was at its most bracingly pluralist between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s',[57] whilst Griffiths has described 1969 as an '*annus mirabilis*'.[58] Nevertheless, the implied decline from the historical highpoint of 1969 mirrored the 1930s generation's move from young things (with varying degrees of brightness and promise) to pillars of the Establishment, and finally to admired but often marginalized figures. The failure, if it is that, of British modernism to sustain itself in the manner it enjoyed in the 1960s is reflected in the writings of its key figures, which increasingly become defensive, at times lamenting, at times agitating, when discussing the decline of the culture with which they identify.

The 1970s witnessed greater stability in the careers of these composers as they moved into Establishment roles: Goehr and Wood secured permanent posts in academia, culminating in their appointments to Cambridge University in 1976 and 1977 respectively, whereas Davies relocated to Orkney, where he balanced the roles of international and community composer. For Goehr and Davies the decade also saw much-publicized reassessments of their musical

54 Goehr, 'The Survival of the Symphony: 3. Past and Present', 25.

55 Goehr, 'The Survival of the Symphony: 3. Past and Present', 26.

56 Davies, 'Will Serious Music Become Extinct?'. In this lecture he returns to a topic that he first raised, in strikingly similar terms, in 'The Young British Composer', 84–5.

57 Whittall, 'British Music', 21.

58 Griffiths, *New Sounds, New Personalities*, 10.

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languages, as each sought enrichment from the past: Goehr looked towards a simplified approach to modality and figured bass, and Davies to tonal processes that emerged through his symphonic writing.[59] Such relocations and reconfigurations inevitably prompted intensified explorations of roots, both traditional, as with Wood's 1977 exploration of (for him) hitherto unfamiliar British composers,[60] and adopted – see Davies's 1976 ruminations on Orkney.[61]

Given their long history of working in education and academia, it is unsurprising that pedagogical topics should appear in the writings of these composers. The musical education advocated by all three is centred on practical experience, albeit filtered in different ways. Such differences of perspective do not render them incommensurate. Indeed, in all their writings a recurrent *leitmotif*, first sounded in the mid-1950s by Davies, is that of the poor quality of education in Britain: 'one sees and hears so many conductors, performers, and, worst of all, composers, who obviously have no clue as to the construction of music, that one wonders just what they did in their colleges. [. . .] If only they had had impressed upon them that they knew next to nothing, they might not be so keen to treat us to their appalling performances or their inane compositions.'[62] Wardour Castle would have been one (collective) opportunity to apply a corrective. Moreover, Davies's experiences as a teacher at Cirencester in the early 1960s demonstrated to him that real progress can be made in traditional teaching establishments; his Royal Philharmonic Society Lecture is in part an extended plea for 'further consideration of the aims of our education system, in relation to society as a whole, and to the place of music within this framework'.[63] Notwithstanding a certain pragmatic shift in Davies's thinking over the decades – not least in his awareness, and relaxation, of certain prohibitive ('elitist') boundaries – the underlying tenets remain the same: if 'serious' music is to continue to have a meaningful presence in our culture, we need to be educated in ways to appreciate it.

As is to be expected, Goehr's and Wood's focus is on university education.[64] Writing in 1973, Goehr sets out his ideal music course. As with Davies, the emphasis is on practical work 'first and foremost'; this is to be supplemented with '[k]nowledge of harmony and counterpoint, and the ability to read a score, without which there can be no serious talk of studying style, comparing pieces and tracing developments. [. . .] To write music well, to play well, even to listen well, means to go back to the beginning and re-examine the simplest facts again and again.'[65] In the same year Wood noted that teaching was for him a vocation, albeit one that sat uneasily with his other primary vocation of composition (9). Some seven years later

59 See, for instance, the almost contemporaneous articles by Bayan Northcott, 'Alexander Goehr: The Recent Music (II)', *Tempo* 125 (1978), 12–18, and Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Symphony', *Tempo* 124 (1978), 2–5.

60 See the essay 'Frank Bridge and the Land Without Music' (34–9).

61 Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Pax Orcadiensis', *Tempo* 119 (1976), 20–22.

62 Davies, 'The Young British Composer', 84. We encounter again here the complaints about conservative institutions and the lack of structural or technical knowledge promoted in such institutions.

63 Davies, 'Will Serious Music Become Extinct?'.

64 Nevertheless Goehr has suggested, in a similar vein to Davies, that '[i]n the education of young children there need not be any division between performing and composing'; Goehr, 'The Survival of the Symphony: 3. Past and Present', 26.

65 Alexander Goehr, 'The Study of Music at University – 5', *Musical Times* 114 (1973), 588–90 (589–90). The invocation of 'listening well' resonates with Wood's concept of the 'honest listener', discussed below.

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one can sense a dissatisfaction with the quality of certain students who turn 'out not to be quite so highly motivated or industrious or talented as he or she has claimed' (15); by 1999 Wood is writing despairingly that

> the whole practice of composition teaching [has] collapsed entirely. Even the mere interchange of information between teacher and taught is clogged up by the circumstance that the pupil is not interested in receiving it – it isn't 'relevant' to his or her needs. In most cases the student is not at all interested in music itself – not as much as the average music lover – but only in 'expressing' him- or herself (whatever that means). (60)

The finger of blame, however, is pointed not at the students, but at 'what the greater, grown-up world has already told him or her' (60). (Whether, though, Wood would go as far as Davies to suggest that 'nearly all children can improvise and compose music competently',[66] given sufficient education, is unclear.) Elsewhere he has commented on his worry about 'the decline in A-level music teaching. The schools are hopeless, and students arrive [at university] knowing next to nothing, not being able to do anything for themselves, and with no real love of music.'[67]

The inability of the educational system to communicate what these composers feel to be fundamental tenets of musical understanding is also the central topic of Davies's Royal Philharmonic Society lecture. But there it is seen as a symptom of the wider failure of contemporary society to recognize and value the cultural traditions from which these tenets are derived. A similar malaise is identified in other social institutions: as the decades pass, political critique in the writings of Goehr and Davies becomes increasingly overt, though as early as 1965 Goehr discussed 'the perpetual battle to persuade councils to spend the statutory sixpence on their rates for "cultural purposes"'.[68] The tenor of Goehr's writings just sixteen years later suggests that things had grown worse. Taking the perceived deterioration of the Proms as a symptom of the general decline of the music division of the BBC, Goehr lamented in 1981 that bureaucracy was replacing the 'liveliness and richness' of British musical life.[69] That some of the ideas outlined in Goehr's 1987 Reith lectures have come to pass (for instance, the community engagement of orchestras) might suggest that musical developments have not been unremittingly bleak (Davies's RPS lecture makes similar concessions). Still, there remains a shared perception that the halcyon days have passed. What a contrast, then, is found in the writings of the younger generation; a composer such as Robin Holloway suggests that 'for all the alleged emancipation [in the 1960s], musical composition in general was held then in bonds of unprecedented severity. In spite of the diminutions caused by financial cutbacks, together with cultural and intellectual absurdities galore, I truly believe that things have improved'.[70]

66 Davies, 'Will Serious Music Become Extinct?'.

67 Richard Wigmore, 'Hugh Wood', *Cambridge Alumni Magazine* (Lent Term 1999), 40–41 (41).

68 Goehr, 'Tippett at Sixty', 22.

69 Alexander Goehr, 'The Problem of Renewal', *The Listener*, 10 September 1981, p. 263.

70 Holloway, 'The 1960s', 235. See also note 9.

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Thus, by the late 1980s, the Young Turks of the 1960s had become senior establishment figures, open to the same accusations of conservatism that they had once levelled at the establishment that preceded them. The respective titles of Goehr's 1987 Reith Lectures ('The Survival of the Symphony') and Davies's 2005 Royal Philharmonic Society Lecture ('Will Serious Music Become Extinct?') are indicative of the composers' concerns that the musical culture to which they belong is slipping away.[71] Such writings embody both a vigorous defence of, and a mournful elegy for, a musical culture perceived as increasingly under assault institutionally, commercially, and educationally.[72]

## IV

Read against this background of British modernism's rise and subsequent relocation within musical culture, *Staking Out the Territory* in part offers a resistance to a loss of centrality, symbolized by the increased need to assert notions of authority and value in an age in which such assertions are viewed with suspicion, if not mockery. If Wood's writings, and indeed his music,[73] are rooted in early twentieth-century modernist values, it is because it is here that Wood finds the most recent traces of a flourishing tradition in which such values are nurtured: 'there is no one [now] who would have any interest in belonging to such a tradition or feel an honour to continue it. The only possible candidate – or indeed, applicant – died some forty-eight years ago in Los Angeles [Wood was writing in 1999]. Since then, we have lived without such a figure of authority' (58).

Questions of the continuity and authority of tradition surface elsewhere in this volume, in particular in Wood's programme notes for the 'concert hall' (from the period 1973–8) and for chamber works (1991–3). The former tend to be shorter; the latter allow for greater expansiveness. The origins of these essays mean that more in-depth technical accounts of works are few and far between. (It is doubtful in any case that, given Wood's aversion to systematic methods, he would show any inclination towards extended analytical writing.)[74]

71 Both composers had in fact written on the subject before: Davies offered a somewhat pessimistic contribution to a symposium on the future of the symphony orchestra, published as 'The Orchestra is Becoming a Museum', in 'The Symphony Orchestra – Has it a Future?', *Composer* 37 (1970), 2–5, and Goehr had advocated the '[r]efinding [of] the values of the old' in his 'Modern Music and Society' of 1979, reprinted in *Finding the Key*, 77–101. Equally indicative is the use of traditional formal and generic models in the music of these composers, effecting what Kenneth Gloag has described as a 'generic contract between past and present' (Gloag, *Maw:* Odyssey, 12).

72 In a similar vein, Wood found the quotation of the *Eroica* Symphony in Strauss's *Metamorphosen* to be 'a lament not for a regime but for a whole culture, for a way of life and, in particular, a musical world that Strauss saw passing away in front of his very eyes and ears. It's a tribute to the Past' (21).

73 Arnold Whittall has drawn a distinction between Wood's modernism, which he claims 'is ultimately more indebted in ethos to composers like Franz Schmidt, Hans Pfitzner, and his mentor Mátyás Seiber than to his own more radical contemporaries' such as Goehr, Davies, and Birtwistle; 'English Orthodoxies', *Musical Times* 149 (Winter 2008), 97–102 (100). The difference, Whittall contends, is that 'Wood's way of dealing musically with the authentic feelings that arose when the loss of "idealism and optimism" was accepted was surely to counter modernism with classicism, rather than to use modernism as a stick with which to beat the unreal expectations and over-optimistic integration of classicism' (100).

74 Wood, whom Christopher Wintle has described as being 'gifted with special powers of analytic insight', directs his analytical powers primarily towards structural and motivic features, though without recourse to the extended

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Rather the emphasis is firmly on musical experience, both aural and creative. For the 'honest listener', whom Wood defines as 'somebody who is more interested in what his ears tell him than in being told what to think' (91), 'landmarks' are provided to help negotiate the work in question (92). In the essay 'Bariolage à la Berg' (123–6) Wood notes that '[t]he listener's conscious experience of the formal structure remains the first requirement in abstract instrumental music (correction: all music)' (124).[75] These structural landmarks tend to be expressed descriptively, often brought vividly to life in a Toveyesque manner with an apt adjective or metaphor and, where appropriate, linked to more familiar examples to help conjure up in the imagination the required sound.[76]

There are those who will find Wood's invocation of the 'honest listener' suspect, in that the adjective suggests an ethical stance absent from many twenty-first century approaches to listening. Wood's evident identification with the 'many practising musicians for whom the fabric of continuing musical society remains whole, if a bit tattered' (52) makes clear the provenance of the 'honest listener' and his or her roots in the nineteenth-century Germanic tradition. To ally such ('honest') listening practices with a particular tradition, and one that requires years of training, is one of a number of ways in which Wood's writing on music can appear exclusionary: Taruskin's charge of 'insularity' might be better directed here than at supposed nationalist impulses in Wood's thinking.[77] But this section of the book indicates that Wood's identification is with a much broader range of European traditions than that represented by the Viennese Classics from Beethoven to Schoenberg. It draws in both early twentieth-century Franco-Russian works (Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky) and such English composers as Bridge, Elgar, Walton, and Tippett. This is also indicative of a broader current in British modernist thinking – the need to locate musical authority (and thus validity) in a greater variety of musical traditions than hitherto.

For instance, in the volume's only discussions of his own works – the Cello Concerto Op. 12 (1965–9) and the Second String Quartet Op. 13 (1969–70) – Wood reveals a distinct ambivalence regarding the 'technical means' of the twelve-note method: 'I've absorbed some

*Formenlehre* terminology used by Schoenberg and his followers over the last century; Alexander Goehr with Christopher Wintle, 'The Composer and His Idea of Theory: a Dialogue', in *Finding the Key*, 236–71 (268).

75 As so often in Wood's writings, categorical statements such as these are immediately called into question; here Wood notices that Berg's music actively resists such listening strategies by virtue of its formal ambiguity. This in itself tells us much about the character of the String Quartet Op. 3, albeit in negative terms. Ultimately, however, Wood still offers a series of 'landmarks', even if they do not always correspond to traditional formal markers; alternative approaches to listening are not considered.

76 See also Venn, *The Music of Hugh Wood*, 16–19.

77 For other ways of thinking about the listening experience without necessarily falling back on 'traditional' values see Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Joshua Fineberg, *Classical Music, Why Bother? Hearing the World of Contemporary Music Through a Composer's Ears* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (London: Fourth Estate, 2007); and Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007). Julian Johnson, in *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), comes close to Wood's concept of the 'honest' listener by suggesting that the ethical value of 'classical music' resides in the modes of thinking it embodies, though he locates such values in the music rather than in the choices made by the listener.

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of the more obvious and commonsensical habits of the serial way of thinking, but have never found much use for the remoter flights of a-musical sub-science it has latterly become' (5). Yet the limitation of this method is that its rigour over the details of a work can lead one to 'neglect the surface allure and the grand gesture' (6). Wood's response is to capture in his Second Quartet something of the painter William Scott's 'rough circles', through the use of aleatory sections contrasted with more tightly controlled material in a Stravinskian mosaic-like construction.[78] It is telling that Wood's account of technical means rapidly leads into matters of expression and form: for him these are all inextricably interlinked. Elsewhere he notes that 'counterpoint is the child of passion not calculation – [. . .] there is no conflict between technique and expressiveness, but rather [. . .] one feeds the other, and [. . .] both are mutually dependent' (61). Here he is writing about Brahms, but the observation applies equally to his own music, and displays once again how thoroughly he has absorbed Schoenbergian modes of thinking. But why is Wood so reluctant to discuss technique in any depth? It is clear from a study of his music that there is far more going on beneath the surface than his writings imply, but he continues to brush aside technical questions with such assertions as '[a]rt is the individual act of creation, it is (Clausewitzianly) the continuation of the personality by other means, and this lovely, irreplaceable flower of the spirit may burgeon upon any old dunghill of theoretical contradiction' (159).[79]

Given the link between technique and expression in Wood's thinking, it is unsurprising that he finds much analytical literature inadequate or misdirected. In a review of the volume *Perspectives on Schoenberg and Stravinsky* that originally appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Wood states baldly that '[f]or more technical articles there is one criterion: do they derive from genuine musical experience and in turn contribute to it?' (162).[80] One analyst whose lifework fulfilled these criteria was Derrick Puffett, who was conscious 'of the limitations of analysis on one hand and its virtues when well done on the other; of its necessary relations to textual scholarship and music history; [and of the] ways in which by clear presentation it could reach out to a larger number of people' (77). Nevertheless, the notion of 'genuine musical experience' needs probing. It does not take much reading between the lines to equate (the verbalization of) such experiences with the ideals of an Austro-German tradition in which particular compositional activities (for instance, articulation of structure) are privileged over others (detailed discussion of technique). Just as telling in this light is, with reference to a chapter by Thomas Adès on Janáček, Wood's comment that the text 'tells you a certain amount about himself as a composer (always the most interesting aspect of analytical articles, which should always be written by composers)'

78 Eight of William Scott's paintings are reproduced on colour plates in *Staking Out the Territory*.

79 On the technique underpinning Wood's music see Venn, *The Music of Hugh Wood*. One might speculate on other reasons for his reticence – whether motivated by a desire to keep such things private or to help promote the humanist aspects of his music – but it should be noted that Wood rarely denies the importance of technique: his early essay, 'Viewpoint, 1954' (3–4), ends with a paean to it. Rather, one suspects, he thinks it should be self-explanatory by virtue of its expressive impact, and thus unnecessary to discuss outside of the 'workshop'.

80 Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone (eds.), *Perspectives on Schoenberg and Stravinsky* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968). The review originally appeared as Wood, 'Antipodes', *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 October 1969.

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(164). Taruskin's accusation that Wood sees musicology as a 'service discipline' might not, therefore, be so wide of the mark.

If, as here, Wood's writings appear unduly provocative, it is only because for him the stakes are so high, as the notable achievements and heroic failings of a long-standing tradition seem to him doomed to be submerged in relativist greyness.[81] I have written elsewhere that Wood's response to this loss takes the form of defiance – an assertion of vitality against the odds – that nevertheless acknowledges and mourns that which has gone.[82] In this respect I have argued that his particular modernism belongs to the humanist tradition represented by Beethoven and Tippett, with whom he shares a belief in music's 'immense moral power' (25). It is for this reason that he feels impelled to remind us of music's provenance as a creative act addressed by one human to other humans and that he is so careful in relating it to the society in which it has been produced. It has been noted, though, that as tastes and judgements in this society shift, Wood's discourse relating to both creative and communicative acts, as well as the particular cultural heritage to which they contribute, appears increasingly narrow in scope. Read negatively, Wood's writings offer few concessions to those who lack such an identification with that heritage; little wonder that his reviews of Elgar books, so steeped in these practices, riled Taruskin so. Yet read with understanding and sympathy, *Staking Out the Territory*, slight as it is, offers more than the sum of its parts, for it can tell us much about the traditions and values that for a number of decades shaped – and continue still to influence – musical life in Britain.

81 For striking examples of provocation mixed with lamentation see the essays 'Beethoven' (24–33, esp. 31–2) and 'A Photograph of Brahms' (44–63, esp. 51).

82 Venn, *The Music of Hugh Wood*, 225–7.

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