

# 'An Ireland Built Anew': Bax's Tintagel and the Easter Rising

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## ‘AN IRELAND BUILT ANEW’: BAX’S *TINTAGEL* AND THE EASTER RISING

Arnold Bax’s tone poem *Tintagel* (1917–19) is one of his best-known compositions, familiar to listeners who know nothing else of his output.<sup>1</sup> But this very familiarity might cause commentators to overlook the complexities of the work. Its Celtic associations, suggestive Wagnerian allusions, and tonal and formal structure invite interpretation in the light of recent musicological developments both in hermeneutics and analysis. Hitherto, interpretative criticism of *Tintagel* has been of two kinds: pictorial and biographical. At the time of its premiere in 1921,<sup>2</sup> and for some decades after, most critics took the composer’s descriptive programme for the work at face value: the music offered ‘a tonal impression of the castle-crowned cliff of ... Tintagel, ... the long distances of the Atlantic’, and the ‘tumult of the sea’, while also suggesting the ‘literary and traditional associations of the scene’ by way of a quotation of the so-called ‘Sick Tristan’ motif from the first act of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.<sup>3</sup> Viewed in this light, *Tintagel* could be comfortably aligned with other seascape compositions by English composers, such as Elgar’s *Sea Pictures* (1899), Vaughan Williams’s *A Sea Symphony* (1903–9), and Frank Bridge’s *The Sea* (1910–11).<sup>4</sup> In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, the emergence of previously unknown biographical details has elicited another interpretation of the work. In September 1917 Cornwall was the location for Bax’s ongoing extramarital affair with Harriet Cohen, a pianist

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Foreman writes that ‘*Tintagel* remained in the repertory when much of Bax’s music was no longer heard’. Foreman, ‘Bax, Sir Arnold’, *Grove Music Online*, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> (accessed 4 Nov. 2014). *Tintagel* is also Bax’s most recorded work. See Graham Parlett’s discography in Lewis Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times* (3rd edn., Woodbridge, 2007), 507–27 at 524–5; and Christopher Webber, ‘Tintagel on Record’ (2007), <[arnoldbax.com/tintagel-on-record-a-survey-by-christopher-webber](http://arnoldbax.com/tintagel-on-record-a-survey-by-christopher-webber)> (accessed 4 Nov. 2014).

<sup>2</sup> *Tintagel* was premiered on 20 October 1921 at the Bournemouth Symphony Concerts. The performance was conducted by Dan Godfrey.

<sup>3</sup> There exist two programmes for *Tintagel* written by Bax: the short description found in the opening pages of the published orchestral score, and an extended version of this which Bax wrote for the performance of *Tintagel* at the Leeds Festival in 1922. The latter programme is quoted in full below, and it is from that programme that the above quotes are taken.

<sup>4</sup> In the pre-1945 reception of *Tintagel* most critics took little notice of the mythological dimension of the work, preferring to focus on the seascape instead. The *Musical Times* wrote that *Tintagel* ‘really suggests something of the majesty of the sea, being spacious and noble in quality’. Herbert Thompson, ‘The Leeds Musical Festival’, *Musical Times*, 63 (1922), 797. Some critics provided their own narratives of Bax’s seascape. The *Radio Times*, for example, produced a very detailed account of the tone poem, bordering on ridiculous, which was reprinted in the *Musical Times*: ‘The sky darkens, lit only by the white scars of gulls’ wings as these birds of storm and desolation are tossed screaming in the gale. ... The gulls and the winds become more and more intense; but in spite of their agitation the terrible ocean-theme looms larger and larger, and tosses their outcry aside. It surges in, rising in a long snoring diapason until it reaches the narrow channel between Tintagel and the mainland’. ‘Feste’ [Harvey Grace], ‘Ad Libitum’, *Musical Times*, 72 (1931), 505.

twelve years his junior.<sup>5</sup> Bax's biographer, Lewis Foreman, has proposed that *Tintagel* constitutes not just a seascape but also a celebration of Bax's 'own passion' at that time.<sup>6</sup> While accepting that these existing interpretations of *Tintagel* are valid, I propose in this article a new (and to some extent complementary) 'Irish' reading of the work, suggesting that it can be considered an implicit response to the 1916 Easter Rising. In doing so, I align *Tintagel* with Bax's contemporary pro-Republican poetry, and link its narrative to a revolutionary impulse to revive the ideals of an ancient heroic age in a post-1916 Ireland.

There is a consensus among Bax scholars that a change in the composer's relationship with Ireland and Celticism took place around the end of the First World War.<sup>7</sup> Aidan Thomson writes that this 'crucial shift in Bax's thinking' was signalled by 'his rejection of mythology ... as a compositional stimulus in favour of landscapes and seascapes' of a more general 'Celtic North'.<sup>8</sup> *Tintagel*, then, with its combination of mythology, landscape, and seascape, would seem to be a key work in Bax's output, standing as it does on the threshold of this shift. But *Tintagel* is not usually included among the group of coeval works that are thought to be linked to contemporary political and revolutionary events in Ireland. Before contesting this exclusion in the latter part of this article, I provide a formal analysis of *Tintagel*—situating it within the framework of James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's Sonata Theory—that serves to underpin my hermeneutic reading of the work. I also offer a closer examination of the existing readings of the piece, hereafter referred to as the 'seascape' reading and the 'Cohen' reading. Crucial to all the interpretations considered here are *Tintagel*'s Wagnerian connections. First, then, I consider how Wagnerism, along with the

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<sup>5</sup> The most detailed account of the events that took place during this period in Cornwall is found in Thomas Elnaes, 'An Anglo-Irish Composer: New Perspectives on the Creative Achievement of Sir Arnold Bax' (MLitt diss., University of Dublin, Trinity College, 2006), 113–32.

<sup>6</sup> Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 161. For other work that espouses this interpretation, see Christopher Webber, 'Tintagel on Record'; Elnaes, 'An Anglo-Irish Composer', 113–55; William B. Hannam, 'Arnold Bax and the Poetry of Tintagel' (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> See Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770–1970* (Cork, 1998), 118–19; Aidan J. Thomson, 'Bax and the "Celtic North"', *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland*, 8 (2012–13), 51–87; Derrick Puffett, 'In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the "Celtic Twilight"', in Jürg Stenzl (ed.), *Art Nouveau, Jugendstil und Musik* (Zurich, 1980), 193–210 at 204; and Fabian Gregor Huss, 'The "Irish Music" of Arnold Bax and E. J. Moeran', in Mark Fitzgerald and John O'Flynn (eds.), *Music and Identity in Ireland and Beyond* (Farnham, 2014), 69–82 at 73.

<sup>8</sup> Thomson, 'Bax and the "Celtic North"', 54–5. Some of Thomson's points regarding Bax's turn from an overt Celticism towards a more northern, Scandinavian (Sibelian) sound-world are anticipated in Andrew Blake's chapter, 'T. H. White, Arnold Bax, and the Alternative History of Britain', in Derek Littlewood and Peter Stockwell (eds.), *Impossibility Fiction: Alternativity, Extrapolation, Speculation* (Amsterdam, 1996), 25–36. See also Gunnar Sundberg, 'National Parallels in the Orchestral Works of Jean Sibelius and Arnold Bax: Focusing on their Symphonic Language', in Tomi Mäkelä (ed.), *Music and Nationalism in 20th-Century Great Britain and Finland* (Hamburg, 1997), 59–64.

often closely associated movement of Theosophy, had an impact both upon Bax and the artistic and nationalist figures with whom he associated in Ireland.

#### IRELAND, WAGNERISM, AND THEOSOPHY

Bax's formative experiences of Wagner's music are well documented by his biographers and in his autobiography, *Farewell, My Youth*, first published in 1943.<sup>9</sup> In the latter, Bax recalled playing through Wagner's works on the piano all day and night during his teenage years, and Lewis Foreman notes that the only scores Bax acquired in youth and kept until his death were his vocal scores of *Die Meistersinger* and *Tristan*.<sup>10</sup> Between 1900 and 1905, Bax's studies at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), with the 'arch-Wagnerian' Frederick Corder, reinforced his already burgeoning obsession with Wagner's music dramas.<sup>11</sup> Although Richard Strauss, Debussy, Delius, and Russian composers, such as Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, and Borodin, had no less of an effect on Bax's early music than Wagner, it was, according to Edwin Evans, above all as a Wagnerian composer that Bax had become known by the end of the First World War.<sup>12</sup>

The basis of Bax's Wagnerian reputation may lie in what Derrick Puffett refers to as the 'vague pantheism' of Bax's early tone poems (such as *In the Faery Hills* (1909), *Christmas Eve on the Mountains* (1912), and *Nympholept* (1912)) which, he claims, would have been 'unthinkable without the model of Wagner'.<sup>13</sup> Although Puffett suggests that this 'mystical, pantheistic strain' of Wagnerian influence stems from *Tristan* and *Parsifal*, the *Ring* is an equally important source. The 'Waldweben' music from *Siegfried*, for example, is echoed in the oscillating woodwind figures found at the opening of Bax's *November Woods* (1914–17), while 'reminiscences of Wagner's "Feuerzauber"' music were observed by one critic at the premiere of *Christmas Eve on the Mountains*, a work which Evans suggested

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<sup>9</sup> Arnold Bax, *Farewell, My Youth and Other Writings by Arnold Bax*, ed. Lewis Foreman (Aldershot, 1992). The first biography of Bax was Colin Scott-Sutherland's *Arnold Bax* (London, 1973).

<sup>10</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 7; Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 15. Corder, however, was a more conservative Wagnerian than his students, and he disliked the post-Wagnerian music of younger composers, such as Richard Strauss. See, for example, Frederick Corder, 'On the Cult of Wrong Notes', *Musical Quarterly*, 1 (1915), 381–6.

<sup>12</sup> Edwin Evans, 'Modern British Composers. II.—Arnold Bax', *Musical Times*, 60 (1919), 103–5 at 103. See also Dennis Andrews (ed.), *Cuchulan Among the Guns: Sir Arnold Bax's Letters to Christopher Whelen from 1949 to 1953 Together with the Latter's Writings and Broadcasts on Bax and his Music* (Cumnor, 1998), 66. For more on the influence of Russian music on Bax, see Gareth James Thomas, 'The Impact of Russian Music in England 1893–1929' (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2005), 168–81.

<sup>13</sup> Puffett, 'In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the "Celtic Twilight"', 197.

fuelled the ‘legend of [Bax’s] Wagnerism’.<sup>14</sup> One might situate this pantheistic current in Bax’s works in the wider context of British musical Wagnerism. Specifically, it might be linked to a substrand of Celtic-inspired British Wagnerism associated with a wonderment at nature—Act III of *Parsifal* and Act II of *Siegfried* again serving as inspiration—and a fascination with mythological creatures (fairies, elves, gnomes, nymphs, and the like). The origins of this substrand might be found in the 1890s with Granville Bantock’s one-act opera *Caedmar* (1892) and Hamish MacCunn’s *Diarmid* (1897).<sup>15</sup> At the same time, allusions to *Tristan* in works such as *Tintagel* (see below) and *November Woods*,<sup>16</sup> which suggest hidden programmes linked to Bax’s personal passions, point more towards a decadent tradition of British Wagnerism. In this regard, Ethel Smyth’s opera *The Wreckers* (premiered in England in 1909), with its Cornish setting, prominence of the sea, and tale of illicit love, constitutes a pertinent precedent for *Tintagel*. But while these British contexts are undoubtedly relevant and require further scrutiny, for present purposes it will be more interesting to consider Bax’s Wagnerism in an Irish context.

Another major figure in Bax’s development (as a composer and poet) was W. B. Yeats, whose poetry, Bax later claimed, ‘always meant more to [him] than all the music of the centuries’.<sup>17</sup> His discovery of Yeats proved to be the beginning of a long association with Ireland and Celticism: ‘I came upon W. B. Yeats’s “The Wanderings of Usheen” in 1902, and in a moment the Celt within me stood revealed’.<sup>18</sup> Between 1902 and the outbreak of the First World War, Bax, who grew up in a mansion in a wealthy London suburb, regularly visited Ireland, especially the west coast, and lived in Dublin between 1911 and 1914. Over these twelve years he became acquainted with various figures associated with the Irish Literary Revival and Irish republicanism, composed music based on Irish themes, and wrote poetry and short stories under the pseudonym Dermot O’Byrne. According to Bax, his early encounters with Yeats and Ireland had the effect of purging his music of the ‘sway of Wagner and Strauss’, causing him to ‘write Irishly using figures and melodies of a definitely Celtic

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Music: Mr. Balfour Gardiner’s Concert’, *The Times*, 5 Mar. 1913, 11; Evans, ‘Modern British Composers. II,—Arnold Bax’, 103.

<sup>15</sup> Both operas involve a scene in which elves (in *Caedmar*), or gnomes and fairies (in *Diarmid*) come out to dance while the male protagonist—a sort of Tristan/Siegfried character in both—lies sleeping. Near the beginning of *Caedmar* the eponymous hero marvels at the singing of the birds, recalling Act II of *Siegfried*, before praising the glories of nature: ‘O joyous rapture! Heavenly bliss! Nature, Goddess divine!’.

<sup>16</sup> Twelve bars before the end of *November Woods* there is an allusion to the opening of the *Tristan* prelude in the first violin and first trumpet.

<sup>17</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 42.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 36.

curve'.<sup>19</sup> Some later writers on Bax have echoed these remarks;<sup>20</sup> Fabian Huss, for example, has recently suggested that the influence of Irish folk music enabled Bax to distance himself from 'established, largely outmoded continental practices'.<sup>21</sup> While there may be some truth in this, it is not the case that Bax's involvement with Ireland and with figures associated with the Irish Literary Revival constituted some kind of break with Wagner; quite the contrary.

Wagnerism did not reach the same heights in Dublin as it did in *fin-de-siècle* London, and an Irish musical Wagnerism never really got off the ground.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, Wagner's influence in literary circles was substantial. Some of those who played a key role in the Irish Literary Revival, such as George Moore and his cousin Edward Martyn, were avid Wagnerites, and Wagner had a lasting effect on other prominent Irish writers, including George Bernard Shaw and James Joyce.<sup>23</sup> Stoddard Martin suggests that Wagner's music dramas appealed to the Irish because of their 'mystical, pagan and vaguely Catholic' nature.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, three of Wagner's works—*Lohengrin*, *Tristan*, and *Parsifal*—are, as Yeats recognized, based on Celtic myths.<sup>25</sup> Unlike some of his contemporaries, Yeats was no fanatical Wagnerian—and no Catholic—but Wagner provided him with a model for the use of myth in art as a vehicle for expressing and promoting a national identity. Yeats wrote in 1898 that the 'German soul' could be perceived in Wagner's mythological dramas, and he felt that 'Irish Legends'—'more numerous, and as beautiful as the Norse and German legends'—could be used to the same effect in his own country.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>20</sup> Colin Scott-Sutherland, for example, describes Bax's discovery of Ireland as a 'liberating force' which counteracted the 'oppressive influences of Wagner and Strauss'. Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 22.

<sup>21</sup> Huss, 'The "Irish Music" of Arnold Bax and E. J. Moeran', 72. Bax very rarely quoted folk music directly; Graham Parlett notes that there are only two works by Bax which contain actual folk tunes: the lost *A Connemara Revel* (1905) and the *Phantasy* for viola and orchestra (1920). Graham Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax* (Oxford, 1999), 54–6, 150–1.

<sup>22</sup> See Michael Murphy, 'Wagner Performance and Reception in Ireland, 1860–1940', in Luca Sala (ed.), *The Legacy of Richard Wagner: Convergences and Dissonances in Aesthetics and Reception* (Turnhout, 2012), 257–68. For two detailed accounts of British Wagnerism, see Anne Dzamba Sessa, *Richard Wagner and the English* (Rutherford, 1979); and Emma Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Stoddard Martin, *Wagner to the Waste Land: A Study of the Relationship of Wagner to English Literature* (London, 1982), 124. Shaw famously interpreted Wagner's *Ring* cycle as a socialist allegory in his book *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898). For a comprehensive assessment of Wagner's influence on Joyce, see Timothy Martin, *Joyce and Wagner: A Study of Influence* (Cambridge, 1991). See also the chapters on Shaw and Joyce in Harry White, *Music and the Irish Literary Imagination* (Oxford, 2008), 133–86.

<sup>24</sup> Martin, *Wagner to the Waste Land*, 121.

<sup>25</sup> Yeats wrote in 1898 that 'Richard Wagner's dramas of "The Ring", are, together with his mainly Celtic "Parsival" and "Lohengrin", and "Tristan and Iseult", the most passionate influence in the arts of Europe'. W. B. Yeats, *Uncollected Prose, vol. 2, Reviews, Articles and Other Miscellaneous Verse, 1897–1939*, ed. J. P. Frayne and C. Johnson (London, 1975), 125.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 125, 129.

Even those writers who did not express any great interest in Wagner, such as Bax's close friend George Russell (who published under the pseudonym 'Æ'), shared with Wagner the interest in mythology, which was fundamental to the project of the Revivalists.<sup>27</sup> That Bax saw his two interests of Wagner and Ireland as compatible is demonstrated by his early attempts at creating an Irish music drama. Graham Parlett has recently uncovered evidence to suggest that Bax was working on 'an Irish Opera', based on the legend of *Grania and Diarmuid*, while he was studying at the RAM in around 1902–3.<sup>28</sup> It is not difficult to see why this particular legend, which involves a love triangle that parallels that of *Tristan und Isolde*, appealed to Bax. This projected Irish opera, along with two subsequent attempts in the genre, never came to fruition.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, these early operatic endeavours demonstrate that Bax's first forays into a 'Celtic wonderland' meant less a break with Wagner than a continuation of his Wagnerism.<sup>30</sup>

Curiously absent from the existing literature on Bax is any consideration of the influence on prominent figures of the Irish Literary Revival, and thus (indirectly) on Bax, of Helena Blavatsky's brand of Theosophy. The Theosophical Society was established in New York in 1875 by Blavatsky, Henry Olcott, and William Quan Judge (born in Dublin). It offered an eclectic combination of Darwinian ideas about evolution, nineteenth-century science, Buddhist and Hindu theories of reincarnation, and comparative religion. The Dublin Lodge of the Theosophical Society was established in 1886, and over the following years a number of prominent figures of the Revival became involved in the movement, including Yeats and Russell (Æ).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Despite his apparent apathy towards music, Bax recalled Russell once expressing admiration for *Tristan und Isolde*. Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 133.

<sup>28</sup> Graham Parlett, 'Bax's *Grania and Diarmid*', *British Music Society News*, 127 (2010), 314–5; Parlett, 'More on Bax's *Grania and Diarmid*', *British Music Society News*, 137 (2013), 46.

<sup>29</sup> The first of these was based on the story of *Deirdre*, which involves a love triangle like that found in *Tristan* and the legend of Diarmuid and Grania. See Graham Parlett, 'The Unwritten Operas of Arnold Bax', *British Music Society News*, 67 (1995), 152–5. See also Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax*, 72–4. Bax's last known attempt at music drama was *Red Owen*, 'a folk comedy rather in the manner of J.M. Synge', which was later published as a play in three acts under Bax's pseudonym Dermot O'Byrne. Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 166; Dermot O'Byrne, *Red Owen: A Play in 3 Acts* (Dublin, 1919); Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax*, 115–17.

<sup>30</sup> Bax refers to Ireland as a 'Celtic wonderland' in *Farewell, My Youth*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> For an overview of the early years of the Dublin Lodge, see Toshio Akai, 'On the Early Writings of AE and the Theosophical Movement of Dublin Lodge', *The Harp*, 12 (1997), 75–89; and Mary E. Bryson, 'Metaphors for Freedom: Theosophy and the Irish Literary Revival', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 3 (June 1977), 32–40. For more on Yeats's and Russell's association with Theosophy, see Ken Monteith, *Yeats and Theosophy* (London, 2008); Nicholas Allen, *George Russell (Æ) and the New Ireland, 1905–30* (Dublin, 2002), 11–26; and Selina Guinness, "'Protestant Magic" Reappraised: Evangelicalism, Dissent, and Theosophy', *Irish University Review*, 33/1 (2003), 14–27.

Ken Monteith suggests that ‘the Theosophical Society validated Yeats’s political interests’ by affirming that the Irish were ‘a distinct race’ from the British—in fact, ‘a *precedent* of the British race’. The Celts, ‘according to theosophists’,

were more in touch with their emotions, more in touch with the spirit world, and embodied a faith which had existed for thousands of years. In contrast, the British were better suited for science, world exploration, and for making trains run on time.<sup>32</sup>

This was hardly a view unique to members of the Theosophical Society. Discussions of Celtic racial characteristics were often presented in explicitly gendered terms in the nineteenth century. Matthew Arnold, in his influential *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), followed Ernest Renan in characterising the Celts as feminine, sentimental, dreamy, primitive, and anti-materialist.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, the English were seen as masculine, politically powerful, and masters of the material world. While some in Ireland reacted against these stereotypes with ‘hyper-masculinity and overt confrontational resistance to Anglo-Saxon domination’,<sup>34</sup> others made a virtue of the stereotypes and terminology originally used to denigrate the Irish. Typically, this involved claiming that the supposedly primitive and backward characteristics of the Irish meant that they were in closer contact with some ancient wisdom which was superior to the political, materialistic power of countries like England.<sup>35</sup> Bax defended the Irish in a similar way, countering Renan’s remark that ‘the Celt has ever worn himself out in mistaking dreams for reality’, by suggesting that ‘the Celt’ knows the difference but ‘deliberately chooses to follow the dream’.<sup>36</sup> Bax perpetuated the stereotype of Ireland as detached from reality, writing that when he arrived in the country his existence was ‘utterly unrelated to material actualities’.<sup>37</sup>

Blavatsky and her disciples believed that all religions stemmed from one ancient religion or truth that had been corrupted over time.<sup>38</sup> Celtic mythology and folklore,

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<sup>32</sup> Monteith, *Yeats and Theosophy*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> David Cairns and Shaun Richards, “‘Women’ in the Discourse of Celticism: A Reading of “The Shadow of the Glen””, *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 13 (June 1987), 43–60; Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge, 2001), 46–9.

<sup>34</sup> Cairns and Richards, “‘Women’ in the Discourse of Celticism”, 46.

<sup>35</sup> Yeats, for example, as Gregory Castle explains, ‘reconfigure[d] primitivism, shifting its locus from a racial to a temporal plane, in order to make a bold claim for the spiritual superiority of a “timeless” people’. Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*, 50.

<sup>36</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 36–7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>38</sup> Christopher Scheer, ‘Theosophy and Wagner Reception in England and the United States, 1886–1911: Some Preliminary Findings’, in Sala (ed.), *The Legacy of Richard Wagner*, 239–55 at 240; Monteith, *Yeats and Theosophy*, 13.



especially the knowledge of these legends among the Irish peasantry,<sup>39</sup> were considered another descendant of this ancient truth—a branch that had been less tainted by the modern age.<sup>40</sup> It is no surprise, then, that many theosophists held the mythological works of Wagner in high esteem.<sup>41</sup> As a young and ardent Wagnerian, Nietzsche argued in *The Birth of Tragedy* that myth was an example of ‘something universal and true which gazes out into infinity’, and it was this universality that appealed to both Wagner and the theosophists.<sup>42</sup> As we shall see, Bax, too, was drawn to the universality of myth.

Although Bax never explicitly expressed an interest in Theosophy, he was surrounded by theosophists in Dublin, and some of his short stories and poems which were first published in theosophical journals show the influence of the movement.<sup>43</sup> One such story is ‘The Lifting of the Veil’, first published in *Orpheus*, a theosophical journal edited by Bax’s brother, Clifford.<sup>44</sup> The title alone brings to mind Blavatsky’s classic theosophical text, *Isis Unveiled* (1877).<sup>45</sup> The main theme of the story is that of catching glimpses of reality in those fleeting moments in which the ‘veil’ is lifted. As with the noumenal/phenomenal dichotomy of the Schopenhauerian universe of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, Blavatsky adopted from Eastern philosophies the idea that the ‘veil of maya’ separates our world of ‘illusion’ from the

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<sup>39</sup> See Edward Hirsch, ‘The Imaginary Irish Peasant’, *PMLA*, 106 (1991), 1116–33.

<sup>40</sup> Margaret Mills Harper writes that ‘Irish myths and stories resonate beyond themselves, suggesting universality and ancient truth’. Margaret Mills Harper, ‘Yeats and the Occult’, in Marjorie Howes and John Kelly (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats* (Cambridge, 2006), 144–66 at 152. Terence Brown has pointed out that Celtic myths were especially compatible with Theosophy because they are ‘full of stories of hauntings, metamorphosis and spirit visitations’. Terence Brown, ‘Cultural Nationalism, Celticism and the Occult’, in Brown (ed.), *Celticism* (Amsterdam, 1996), 221–30 at 225. See also Monteith, *Yeats and Theosophy*, 179.

<sup>41</sup> Anne Dzamba Sessa and Christopher Scheer have shown that Theosophy and Wagnerism often overlapped, particularly in England. Scheer, ‘Theosophy and Wagner Reception in England and the United States, 1886–1911’, 239–55; Sessa, *Richard Wagner and the English*, 128–34. In Ireland, too, Wagner was popular in theosophical circles; the Irish Theosophical Society’s journal ‘invoked Wagner’s name frequently’. Martin, *Wagner to the Waste Land*, 121. Martin writes that ‘the Theosophical Society was attracted to the mysticism of Wagner’.

<sup>42</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, 1999), 83. Wagner wrote in ‘*Zukunftsmusik*’ that ‘that which is eternally comprehensible and purely human appears’ in myth. Quoted in Mark Berry, ‘Richard Wagner and the Politics of Music-Drama’, *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), 663–83 at 674.

<sup>43</sup> For a comprehensive catalogue of Bax’s writings, see Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 456–64. A selection of Bax’s poems are printed in Colin Scott-Sutherland (ed.), *Ideala: Love Letters and Poems of Arnold Bax* (Petersfield, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> Dermot O’Byrne, ‘The Lifting of the Veil’, *Orpheus*, 20 (Oct. 1912), 105–10. Reprinted in Dermot O’Byrne, *Children of the Hills: Tales and Sketches of Western Ireland in the Old Time and the Present Day* (Dublin, 1913), 88–99. Clifford, who was also editor of *Transactions of the Theosophical Art-Circle* (the predecessor of *Orpheus*), first introduced Bax to George Russell in 1911. Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 83. Arnold Bax edited volume 12 of *Orpheus* while his brother was abroad. Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 82–4.

<sup>45</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (New York, 1877). These exact words—‘the lifting of the veil’—are also found in the penultimate sentence of William Q. Judge’s popular (nineteenth-century) introduction to Theosophy: *The Ocean of Theosophy*, (2nd edn., London, 1893), 154.

realm of ‘eternal truth’.<sup>46</sup> Bax often construed his own world in terms of dreams and reality, no doubt in part due to the combined influence of Wagner, Theosophy, and the portrayal of the Irish as dreamers in the gendered discourse of Celticism. This opposition sometimes manifested itself in his musical works, *à la* Wagner, as will be demonstrated in the case of *Tintagel* below.

A further theme found in ‘The Lifting of the Veil’, and in another of Bax’s short stories, ‘Through the Rain’, is reincarnation.<sup>47</sup> The concept of reincarnation was already familiar to writers like Yeats and Russell from Celtic mythology, so they readily embraced the idea when they came across it Blavatsky’s Theosophy.<sup>48</sup> Intimately tied up with the notion of reincarnation was the theosophical belief in the cyclical nature of history, the idea that both the spiritual and physical worlds move in ‘cycles’. According to Blavatsky, history does not repeat itself exactly in each of these cycles, for each new cycle constitutes some kind of progress towards an ultimate goal. Thus we have a sort of cyclical evolution (Blavatsky’s blend of Darwinism, Hinduism, and Buddhism):

The great kingdoms and empires of the world, after reaching the culmination of their greatness, descend again, in accordance with the same law by which they ascended; till, having reached the lowest point, humanity reasserts itself and mounts up once more, the height of its attainment being, by this law of ascending progression by cycles, somewhat higher than the point from which it had before descended.<sup>49</sup>

Parallels (and distinctions) might again be drawn with Wagner, in particular with the cyclical narratives of *Parsifal* and the *Ring*. Both works involve a decline followed by a return to an ideal, as in Theosophy’s cyclical evolution. However, unlike the progress-driven cycles described by Blavatsky, Aidan Thomson suggests that the narrative of *Parsifal*, ‘whereby an ideal realm is first corrupted and then “redeemed” ... is not goal-directed but rather cyclical, ahistorical, and thus also antimodernist and antiprogress’.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Warren Darcy has

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<sup>46</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (London, 1889), 148.

<sup>47</sup> Dermot O’Byrne, ‘Through the Rain’, *Orpheus*, 15 (Jul. 1911), 301–5. Reprinted in O’Byrne, *Children of the Hills*, 20–9. ‘Through the Rain’ also seems to describe something akin to astral projection, another idea that might have filtered down to Bax from his theosophist friends.

<sup>48</sup> Miranda J. Green, *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend* (London, 1992), 175; W. Y. Evans Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (London, 1911), 368. Seamus Deane writes that ‘reincarnation seems to have been the most fervently held of all Yeats’s private beliefs’. Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1880–1980* (London, 1985), 41. Russell once claimed to remember a previous life in an Indian village. See Akai, ‘On the Early Writings of AE and the Theosophical Movement of Dublin Lodge’, 78.

<sup>49</sup> Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> Aidan J. Thomson, ‘Elgar and Chivalry’, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 28 (2005), 254–75 at 257. One might still argue that *within* this ultimately cyclical narrative there are smaller-scale goal-directed narratives.

argued that the cyclical narrative of the *Ring* suggests a pessimistic kind of history in which ‘humanity never learns anything, [and] it is doomed to repeat past errors until it finally destroys itself’.<sup>51</sup>

Although Bax might not have actually believed in reincarnation or the cyclical progress of history, these ideas evidently had an impact on his literary work. But to what extent might such ideas be relevant to his musical works? I aim to demonstrate in the ‘Irish’ reading of *Tintagel* below that the work presents a simultaneously teleological and cyclical narrative. These sorts of narrative—these musical processes—are, of course, common to many compositions of the period, so I am not suggesting that there is a causal link between the narrative of *Tintagel* and both the cyclical evolution proposed by Blavatsky and the Wagnerian process of ideal-corruption-redemption (or regeneration) outlined by Thomson. Nonetheless, there is a certain compatibility between them, and these correspondences seem pertinent given Bax’s Wagnerian leanings and his immersion in Theosophical ideas in Ireland. The narrative of *Tintagel* might, then, at least be seen to reflect some of these broader aesthetic currents that formed the backdrop to Bax’s formative musical period and his experiences in Ireland.

#### BAX, PEARSE, AND THE EASTER RISING

While there is no question that Bax aligned his work (literary and musical) with the aesthetic concerns of the Irish Literary Revival, his relationship with Irish politics, particularly with Irish republicanism, is less clear. Clifford Bax wrote that his brother never ‘took much interest in politics’, and Aidan Thomson has recently argued that ‘there is little evidence that [Bax] had any deep commitment to nationalist politics’.<sup>52</sup> However, while he was living in Dublin, Bax regularly attended the evening gatherings that took place at Russell’s house (a short walk away from Bax’s own), and there he came to know a number of prominent nationalists.<sup>53</sup> These included Michael O’Rahilly (‘The O’Rahilly’), Darrell Figgis, James Stephens, Thomas MacDonagh, Padraic Colum, Constance Markievicz (Countess Markievicz), and Patrick Pearse.<sup>54</sup> Some of these people were no more than acquaintances of Bax. However, he did count Stephens as a friend, and Harriet Cohen described Figgis—a

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<sup>51</sup> Warren Darcy, ‘The Pessimism of the *Ring*’, *Opera Quarterly*, 4 (1986), 24–48 at 35.

<sup>52</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, xxvi. Thomson, ‘Bax and the “Celtic North”’, 74.

<sup>53</sup> Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 97.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 85–6, 88. Bax described Padraic Colum and his wife Mary as his ‘greatest friends in Ireland’. Letter to Harriet Cohen, Wednesday, 26 April 1916. British Library, MS Mus. 1651. Padraic was a prominent figure of the Irish Literary Revival, a member of the Gaelic League, and a close associate of MacDonagh.

member of the Irish Volunteers and involved in gun-running prior to the Easter Rising—as one of Bax’s ‘closest friends’ whom they saw ‘nearly all the time’.<sup>55</sup> Evidence suggests that Bax shared some of the views of his republican friends. In his autobiography, for example, Bax mentions that he ‘hated’ the ‘politics’ of a certain Caroline Blake, a widow who presided over a large estate in Renvyle, Connemara, Co. Galway, during the years of the Land War, and who became a ‘heroine of the Unionist cause’.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps more revealing is that after Bax’s one and only meeting with Patrick Pearse, the latter remarked to Bax’s good friend Molly Colum that ‘I think your friend Arnold Bax may be one of us’.<sup>57</sup>

Pearse, the schoolteacher, poet, and political revolutionary, clearly illustrates how the artistic and political spheres intersected in early twentieth-century Ireland. Obsessed with the mythical Celtic hero Cúchulainn, with Christ’s crucifixion, and with the notion of ‘blood sacrifice’,<sup>58</sup> he thought that the legend of Cúchulainn was ‘like a retelling ... of the story of Calvary’,<sup>59</sup> and believed that by sacrificing himself, as he did in 1916, he too could bring about a redemption—for the nation of Ireland.<sup>60</sup> Pearse aspired to ‘bring back in Ireland’ a ‘Heroic Age’—no doubt the age of Cúchulainn as depicted in Standish O’Grady’s epic *History of Ireland* (1878–80)—and seems to have believed that his redemptive act of blood sacrifice might usher in this revival.<sup>61</sup> These hopes for a regenerated Ireland sat comfortably with the theosophists’ belief that civilizations move through cycles of progress and decline. In fact, theosophists had predicted that the start of a new historical cycle would begin around the turn of the century, and Yeats and Russell ‘connected this prediction with prophecies of Ireland’s spiritual reawakening’.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Harriet Cohen, *A Bundle of Time: The Memoirs of Harriet Cohen* (London, 1969), 37.

<sup>56</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 40; Tim Robinson, *Connemara: The Last Pool of Darkness* (Dublin, 2008), 58.

<sup>57</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 93.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Brigid Pearse (ed.), *The Home-Life of Pádraig Pearse* (Dublin, 1934), 141; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising, Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), 96.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Joost Augusteijn, *Patrick Pearse: The Making of a Revolutionary* (Basingstoke, 2010), 295.

<sup>60</sup> See Sean Farrell Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption: The Mind of the Easter Rising, 1916* (Washington, D. C., 1994), 194.

<sup>61</sup> Padraic Colum and Edward J. O’Brien, *Poems of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (Boston, 1916), xiii. The character of Cúchulainn was popularized by Standish O’Grady’s *History of Ireland*, 2 vols. (London, 1878–80); and, later, by Lady Gregory’s *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (London, 1902). For an overview of the legends associated with Cúchulainn, see James MacKillop, *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford, 2004), 115–17.

<sup>62</sup> Selina Guinness, “‘Protestant Magic’ Reappraised: Evangelicalism, Dissent, and Theosophy”, 17. Some, including Russell, came to view Pearse as a reincarnation of the heroic Cúchulainn, and thus he could be seen as the agent of change that had brought about this new era in Ireland’s history. William Irwin Thompson, *The Imagination of an Insurrection, Dublin, Easter 1916: A Study of an Ideological Movement* (West Stockbridge, Mass., 1982), 183.

Given that sacrifice and redemption are prominent and recurring themes in Wagner's works, it is perhaps no surprise that Pearse 'went to every opera that came to Dublin', and that, according to his sister, Wagner's music dramas were his 'particular favourites'.<sup>63</sup> In 1904, while studying in Europe, Pearse even made the pilgrimage to Bayreuth where he attended performances of Wagner's *Ring* cycle.<sup>64</sup> Elaine Sisson has argued that Pearse was impressed with Wagner's music dramas because they offered a model for the expression of national identity and heroic masculinity, a model that could be used to counter the feminine stereotype of Ireland and the perceived British superiority over the Irish.<sup>65</sup> Pearse believed that Cúchulainn was the exemplification of such masculinity, and he no doubt recognized that the Siegfried of Wagner's *Ring* represented a similarly masculine hero.<sup>66</sup>

Pearse's attempted revolution and self-sacrifice surely appeared to Bax as events of Wagnerian proportions; like Pearse, Bax aestheticized the violence of the rebels. Previously unpublished correspondence between Bax and Cohen illustrates the composer's initial excitement upon hearing of the incipient insurrection in Dublin, and his subsequent sorrow upon learning of Pearse's death. Though they had apparently met only once, Pearse made a deep impression on the composer. Two days into the Rising Bax wrote to Cohen:

All day my thoughts have been a strange kinship of you and the sudden dramatic Irish rebellion. This has excited me very much. ... I can't help feeling very strongly about all this. Do you understand? I want to talk to you about Ireland's recent history someday.<sup>67</sup>

Less than a year before the Rising, Bax had written that 'acts of patriotic self-sacrifice' were a 'nobl[e]' manifestation of 'the vital consciousness of nationality', and he certainly seems to have regarded Pearse's actions as those of an Irish martyr.<sup>68</sup> He wrote to Cohen after the news came through that Pearse—along with a number of other senior figures in the Irish Republican Brotherhood who led the Rising—had been executed by a British firing squad:

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<sup>63</sup> M. B. Pearse (ed.), *The Home-Life of Pádraig Pearse*, 116, 118.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 118; Pat Cooke, 'Patrick Pearse: The Victorian Gael', in Roisín Higgins and Regina Uí Chollatáin (eds.), *The Life and After-Life of P. H. Pearse* (Dublin, 2009), 45–62 at 46.

<sup>65</sup> Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork, 2004), 86–7.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 79. There are in fact numerous parallels between the two characters that Pearse probably observed. They are both of supernatural origin, closely linked to the gods, and their lives are filled with supernatural occurrences and heroic exploits. Cúchulainn, like Siegfried, owns a sword (and a spear) which has magical properties, and in some stories he receives warnings from ravens—not dissimilar to when Siegfried is warned by a bird of Mime's treachery in *Siegfried*. In some accounts Cúchulainn is said to have been the product of incestuous relations between a brother and sister (just as Siegfried is). MacKillop, *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, 72, 116, 245; Green, *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*, 70–2.

<sup>67</sup> Wednesday, 26 April 1916. British Library, MS Mus. 1651.

<sup>68</sup> Bax, 'A British School of Composers', *Musical Herald*, 810 (1915), 400. Reprinted in Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 105.

So poor Pearse was shot yesterday morning. It is a wonderful world, isn't it? He was one of the most whole-hearted idealists that I ever met and I know that all he did was rooted in love—love for Ireland. I suppose the gods understand these things and know how to award aright. We had a wonderful talk one evening at the Columns about the West and the Gaelic world, all those little intimately and tenderly Irish things that stir the heart's depths like the little characteristic movements of a beloved one. I shall never forget those who move me in this way, wherever he or she may be or whatever the world's verdict on them. These days are pretty hideous and only yourself can bring light into them.<sup>69</sup>

The Easter Rising and Pearse's execution provoked the most political works that Bax ever produced. These took the form of both poetry and music. Most notably, he wrote an elegiac tone poem, *In Memoriam: In Memory of Patrick Pearse* (1916), and produced a collection of nine poems, *A Dublin Ballad and Other Poems* (1918), on the subject of the Easter Rising and subsequent political events in Ireland.<sup>70</sup> Bax composed a number of other musical works during this time that are clearly related to the momentous happenings in Ireland, or that otherwise seem to contain a 'hidden "in memoriam" programme'.<sup>71</sup> These include another work with the title *In Memoriam*, for string quartet, harp, and cor anglais (1917), an *Elegiac Trio* (1916), the song *A Leader* (1916), the *Symphonic Variations* for piano and orchestra (1917),<sup>72</sup> and the *Phantasy* for viola and orchestra (1920).<sup>73</sup> I argue here that *Tintagel* could be included among this group of works, but first I offer a formal analysis of the work and consider the two existing interpretations of *Tintagel*: the 'seascape' reading and the 'Cohen' reading.

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<sup>69</sup> Thursday, 4 May 1916. British Library, MS Mus. 1651.

<sup>70</sup> This volume of poetry, published under Bax's Irish pseudonym Dermot O'Byrne, was printed but never commercially issued because various lines and, in one instance, an entire poem, were deleted by the British government censor. The whole collection is printed in Scott-Sutherland (ed.), *Ideala: Love Letters and Poems of Arnold Bax*, 241–50.

<sup>71</sup> Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 148.

<sup>72</sup> Bax wrote in a programme note that the *Symphonic Variations* depicts a hero 'passing through a number of different experiences, a clue to which is given in the titles affixed to each variation'. Of the titles Bax gave to each variation, two suggest a possible link to the events of 1916: the third is named 'Strife', and the last is named 'Triumph'. Foreman suggests that this 'Strife' may refer to a 'domestic conflict' between him and his wife but does not expand on the idea that the work might be linked to the Easter Rising. See Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 149, 152–6.

<sup>73</sup> The *Phantasy* quotes music from 'Amhrán na bhFiann' ('The Soldier's Song', now the Irish national anthem), which was popular with the Irish Volunteers, and frequently sung in the internment camps for Irish prisoners following the Easter Rising. See Ruth Sherry, 'The Story of the National Anthem', *History Ireland*, 4/1 (1996), 39–43 at 39–40. Bax's quotation of this music occurs in the bass at letter 'X' in the score of the *Phantasy*. It is the melody which accompanies the last two lines of the song's chorus, 'Mid cannon's roar and rifles' peal / We'll chant a soldier's song'. See Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax*, 150–1.

## TINTAGEL: FORM AND INTERPRETATION

### *The 'Seascape' Reading and a Formal Analysis*

Bax claimed in his extended programme note for *Tintagel* (completed in short score in October 1917 and orchestrated in January 1919) that the piece offers only a vague 'impression' of Tintagel Castle and the sea, but his subsequent description suggests some direct analogies between physical phenomena and musical events. Understood in terms of Bax's programme, the work follows what Carolyn Abbate refers to as a 'miming model': 'the composer invents a musical work that acts out or expresses psychological or physical events in a noisy and yet incorporeal sonic *miming*'.<sup>74</sup> The references to King Arthur, King Mark, and Tristan and 'Isolda' point to a more complex programme that goes beyond the seascape narrative, but Bax's description gives the impression that these legendary associations are merely incidental:

This work is only in the broadest sense programme music. The composer's intention is simply to offer a tonal impression of the castle-crowned cliff of (now sadly degenerate) Tintagel, and more especially of the long distances of the Atlantic, as seen from the cliffs of Cornwall on a sunny, but not windless, summer day. The literary and traditional associations of the scene also enter into the scheme. The music opens, after a few introductory bars, with a theme, given out by brass, which may be taken as representing the ruined castle, now so ancient and weatherworn as to seem an emanation of the rock upon which it is built. The subject is worked to a broad diatonic climax, and is followed by a long melody for strings, which may suggest the serene and almost limitless spaces of the ocean. After a while a more restless mood begins to assert itself, as though the sea were rising, bringing with it a new sense of stress, thoughts of many passionate and tragic incidents in the tales of King Arthur and King Mark and others among the men and women of their time.<sup>75</sup> A wailing chromatic figure is heard, and gradually dominates the music until finally it assumes a shape which recalls to mind one of the subjects of the first Act of 'Tristan and Isolda' (whose fate was, of course, intimately connected with Tintagel). Here occurs a motif which may be taken as representing the increasing tumult of the sea. Soon after there is a great climax, suddenly subsiding, followed by a passage which will perhaps convey the impression of immense waves slowly gathering force until they smash themselves upon the impregnable rocks. The theme of the

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<sup>74</sup> Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N. J., 1991), 26–7.

<sup>75</sup> In the shorter programme note that is printed at the start of the score, Bax describes *Tintagel*'s central section as 'the more literary division of the work'.

sea is heard again, and the piece ends as it began, with a picture of the castle still proudly fronting the sun and wind of centuries.<sup>76</sup>

Hitherto, all discussions of *Tintagel* have considered the work to be in some kind of ternary form,<sup>77</sup> but it might more profitably be viewed in terms of what James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy refer to as a ‘sonata deformation’.<sup>78</sup> This is not to claim that *Tintagel* simply is ‘in’ sonata form and not ‘in’ ternary form. Instead, following Hepokoski and Darcy’s premise that sonata form is ‘essentially *dialogic*, not conformational’, I suggest that the work can be interpreted as being in dialogue with ‘a set of implied norms ... which the reception community is assumed to share’.<sup>79</sup> As Hepokoski points out in his examination of Strauss’s *Till Eulenspiegel*, single-movement tone poems ‘had derived historically from the opera and concert overture’, a genre which ‘most commonly laid out a sonata form or a deformation thereof’.<sup>80</sup> This fact, along with ‘crucially placed signals of [sonata form] provided in the work’, would lead a ‘text-adequate listener or musical insider of 1895’ to expect and to hear a work in ‘a cleverly charged dialogue’ with sonata form proper.<sup>81</sup> A ‘text-adequate listener’ at the premiere of *Tintagel* in 1921 would likely have had similar expectations of a tone-poem stemming from the Straussian tradition.<sup>82</sup> Not only were Strauss’s tone-poems—many of which can be heard as sonata deformations—genre-defining staples of the repertoire (and thus still well-known to audiences at the time), but more recent works, composed closer to

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<sup>76</sup> Programme written for the performance of *Tintagel* at the Leeds Festival in 1922. Quoted in Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax*, 140.

<sup>77</sup> See Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 90; Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 164; Hannam, ‘Arnold Bax and the Poetry of *Tintagel*’, 105–6; Elnaes, ‘An Anglo-Irish Composer’, 147.

<sup>78</sup> Their influential ‘Sonata Theory’ is most clearly set out in James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford, 2006). For work that discusses sonata form and its deformations in relation to later repertoire (which is stylistically closer to Bax’s tone poems), see Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge, 1993); ‘Beethoven Reception: The Symphonic Tradition’, in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2001), 424–59 at 447–54; ‘Framing *Till Eulenspiegel*’, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 30 (2006), 4–43; ‘Fiery-Pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero? Strauss’s *Don Juan* Reinvestigated’, in Bryan Gillam (ed.), *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work* (Durham, N.C., 1992), 135–76; ‘Structure and Program in *Macbeth*: A Proposed Reading of Strauss’s First Symphonic Poem’, in Bryan Gillam (ed.), *Richard Strauss and his World* (Princeton, 1992), 67–89; Warren Darcy, ‘Bruckner’s Sonata Deformations’, in Timothy L. Jackson and Paul Hawkshaw (eds.), *Bruckner Studies* (Cambridge, 1997), 256–77; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, ‘Aspects of Modernism in Elgar’s Music’ (2013), <<http://www.jpehs.co.uk/2013/02/26/aspects-of-modernism-in-e>> (accessed 1 Nov. 2014); Michael Allis, ‘Bantock and Southey: Musical Otherness and Fatalism in *Thalaba the Destroyer*’, *Music & Letters*, 95 (2014), 39–69. Aidan Thomson has recently written about Sonata Theory in relation to Bax’s Fourth Symphony. See Thomson, ‘Bax’s “Sea Symphony”’, in Eric Saylor and Christopher Scheer (eds.), *British Music and the Sea* (Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming 2016).

<sup>79</sup> Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 615–6.

<sup>80</sup> Hepokoski, ‘Framing *Till Eulenspiegel*’, 30.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 29–30.

<sup>82</sup> Bax referred to *Tintagel* as a ‘tone picture’ in the programme printed at the front of the published score, a description which, though having slightly different implications to ‘poem’, would surely encourage listeners to hear the work in the context of the tone poem genre.



home, would have further established the expectation that such works would be in dialogue with the sonata-form tradition. Notably, Elgar's 'symphonic study', *Falstaff* (1913) can be interpreted as a sonata deformation, as can his concert overtures *Froissart* (1890), *Cockaigne* (1901), and *In the South* (1903–4)—works which arguably cross over into the tone poem genre.<sup>83</sup> To be sure, other well-known and, to some extent, programmatic orchestral pieces from the time, such as Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) and Delius's *In a Summer Garden* (1908), were closer to ternary form or suggested a blend of both ternary and sonata-form characteristics.<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, ternary form was not central to the symphonic or tone poem genre in the way that sonata form was.

While Bax's earlier tone poems, such as *In the Faery Hills*, were usually more ternary than sonata-like, his approach to form is more complex in his later works, *The Garden of Fand* (1914–16), *November Woods*, and *Tintagel*. Peter Pirie's assertion that '*Fand* and *November Woods* are in sonata form' is overly simplistic.<sup>85</sup> More insightful are Anthony Payne's remarks on Bax's 'sprawling symphonic-poem design': a 'mixture of ternary and sonata form' that can be 'found in the *Garden of Fand*, *November Woods*, and the opening movements of the Second, Third and Fifth Symphonies'.<sup>86</sup> In fact, *Fand*'s structure would seem better interpreted as an arch-shaped ABCBA form, as noted by Derrick Puffett.<sup>87</sup> Compared with the somewhat episodic *Fand*, *November Woods* is more clearly in dialogue with sonata form, as suggested in particular by the move to the dominant key for a lyrical second theme, and the return of this theme in the tonic major towards the end of the work. Thus, in part because of the general expectations of the tone poem genre, and in part because Bax's own most recent tone poems were becoming increasingly sonata-like, an informed and attentive audience at the premiere and subsequent performances of *Tintagel* in the early 1920s would, above all, expect that the work ask its listeners to hear it against a background of sonata-form norms. As the music of *Tintagel* unfolds as a '*temporal* process of ongoing dialogue',<sup>88</sup> there are a number of 'crucially placed signals' that affirm the sonata-form

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<sup>83</sup> See, for example, J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Invention of the Human: *Falstaff*, Opus 68', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 28 (2005), 230–53; and the same author's 'Aspects of Modernism in Elgar's Music' for a Hepokoskian analysis of *In the South*.

<sup>84</sup> Matthew Brown, 'Tonality and Form in Debussy's *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune*', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 15 (1993), 127–43. Anthony Payne has observed 'vestiges of sonata and ternary structures' in *In a Summer Garden*. Payne, 'Delius, Frederick', *Grove Music Online*, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> (accessed 7 April 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Peter Pirie, 'More Than a Brazen Romantic', *Music and Musicians*, 19 (1971), 32–43 at 34.

<sup>86</sup> Anthony Payne, 'Problems of a Lyric Composer', *Music and Musicians*, 13 (1965), 17.

<sup>87</sup> Puffett, 'In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the "Celtic Twilight"', 200.

<sup>88</sup> Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 616.

concept's relevance to the work. Equally, there are aspects that challenge it, but this is typical of sonata deformations and of the compositional practice of the era. In fact, it is these deviations from the norm that provide us with a 'hermeneutic opportunity'.<sup>89</sup>

Table 1 provides an interpretation of *Tintagel* as a sonata deformation, and shows how the music corresponds with Bax's programme. The ruins of Tintagel Castle are first suggested by the music of bars 7–9, which bear a resemblance, in terms of their general melodic contour, rhythmic pattern, and sonority, to Wagner's 'Valhalla' motif from the *Ring* cycle.<sup>90</sup> After what prove to be twelve introductory bars, which introduce a distinctive (and Debussyan) ostinato accompanimental figure in the violins, we hear a strong 'masculine' theme in the brass (Ex. 1). Ostensibly representing the castle, this music has all the rhetoric of a sonata-form primary theme, setting in motion the work's dialogue with a set of background sonata-form norms. This B major theme, organized internally as a sentence, culminates with what Bax describes as the 'broad diatonic climax' (in B major) at bar 27.<sup>91</sup> Though not underpinned by a perfect authentic cadence (PAC), this moment may be heard as articulating the end of the primary-theme zone.

There is no proper transition following this, but the bars immediately after the climax are characteristic of 'caesura fill'—music which would conventionally link the end of the transition to the secondary theme and which can fulfil the function of 'energy-loss' needed to prepare for the onset of that theme.<sup>92</sup> The next theme (Ex. 2), described by Bax as depicting 'the serene and almost limitless spaces of the ocean', does not begin in a new key area, but rather remains in the tonic key of B major. A listener hearing the work as a dialogue with sonata form would expect at this point a secondary theme in a new key, so the fact that the music here remains in B major presents a challenge to the sonata-form concept: one of the fundamental principles of Hepokoski and Darcy's Sonata Theory is that the exposition must 'move to and cadence in a secondary key'. This cadence, conventionally a PAC, marks the

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<sup>89</sup> Aidan Thomson suggests that Bax's 'hybrid forms' may be treated 'as a hermeneutic opportunity'. Thomson, 'Bax's "Sea Symphony"'.  
<sup>90</sup> Percy Scholes, reviewing the work in 1922, noted there was a 'big Walhalla feeling about the work'. P[ercy] A[lfred] S[choles], 'Music of the Week: Bax Once More', *Observer*, 26 Nov. 1922, 10.

<sup>91</sup> A sentence in the Schoenbergian sense, as theorized in William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford, 1998). Bars 13–20 fulfil the presentation function of a sentence: the dotted fanfare—the four-bar 'basic idea'—is repeated underneath the horns in bb. 17–20. The music following this displays the kind of fragmentation typical of a continuation section of a sentence, and ultimately leads to the resolution in the tonic at b. 27.

<sup>92</sup> Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 40–1.

point of the ‘essential expositional closure’ (EEC).<sup>93</sup> While there is a brief tonicisation of the subdominant, E major, at bar 43, the music soon shifts back to the tonic, B major. What may still be heard as the secondary-theme zone (for reasons explained below) concludes with a modified imperfect authentic cadence (IAC) in that key at bars 54–5 (Ex. 3), which may be taken to constitute the EEC.<sup>94</sup>

[INSERT EXX. 1, 2, AND 3 HERE]

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 16–18.

<sup>94</sup> Evidently this is not a very conventional IAC, but the V–I motion is still apparent. The music of bar 54 is essentially just a prolongation of the dominant seventh (or ninth) chord. The use of an IAC as a substitute for the more common PAC is considered by Hepokoski and Darcy in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 167–9.

TABLE 1. *Tintagel* as a sonata deformation

Section	Theme/motif	Prevailing key	Parallel in Bax's programme (where identifiable)	Bar Numbers
Introduction	(ostinato figure in violins)	I	'the ruined castle'	1–12
Exposition	Primary theme (P)	I	'the ruined castle' > 'broad diatonic climax'	13–27
	Caesura fill	I		28–32
	Secondary theme (S)	I	'the serene and almost limitless spaces of the ocean'	33–55
	Closing zone (C)	I > (less clear from b. 64)	> 'a more restless mood begins to assert itself'	56–67
Developmental space	S (with ostinato figure)	<sup>b</sup> VI		68–73
	'Sick Tristan' and 'Conflict'		'wailing chromatic figure'	74–9
	S (with ostinato figure)	i		80–4
	'Sick Tristan'			85–6
	'Conflict' and 'Sick Tristan'			87–94
	'Sick Tristan' (Fugato)			95–108
	'Conflict'			109–21
Recapitulation	'Sick Tristan'			122–53
	P	iii (spelt <sup>b</sup> iv, over C ped.) >	'increasing tumult of the sea' > 'great climax, suddenly subsiding'	154–71
	P	<sup>b</sup> vii (over Cb/B ped.) >	'immense waves slowly gathering force until they smash themselves upon the impregnable rocks'	172–89
	S	I	'the theme of the sea is heard again'	190–7
	P	IV > I		198–210
Coda	C (with elements of P)	I		210–17
	S <sup>1.0</sup>	I		218–19
	'Sick Tristan'	I		220–3
	P-based	I	'the piece ends as it began, with a picture of the castle'	224–30

The fact that the EEC is not in a nontonic key in *Tintagel* might cause one to question the relevance of Sonata Theory to the work at all. Rhetorically, however, the theme beginning at bar 34 quite clearly invites interpretation as a sonata-form secondary theme. Its secondary-theme rhetoric is in fact so strong, I would suggest, that a sonata-form literate listener could still hear it as such in spite of it being in the tonic key. This theme fits into Hepokoski and Darcy's category of the 'Lyrically "Singing" or Gracefully *Cantabile* S', and its contrast with the primary theme creates a typically nineteenth-century gendered opposition between the two themes: 'the idea of a masculine P ... counterposed to a feminine (or otherwise eroticized or idealized) S'.<sup>95</sup> Hepokoski identifies Wagner's Overture to *Der Fliegende Holländer* as a *locus classicus* of a particular type of sonata form that involves this gendered opposition of themes, and which is characterized by a number of other features that are also present in *Tintagel*.<sup>96</sup> These include an exposition made up of two contrasting 'blocks', joined by 'only the briefest ... of connective material' (the primary- and secondary-theme zones in *Tintagel* joined by the six bars of caesura fill), and a secondary theme which returns in the recapitulation 'in a grand, *fortissimo* apotheosis, as the climax and *telos* of the piece'.<sup>97</sup> This 'Dutchman type' of form, as Hepokoski refers to it, often contains a 'built-in struggle-to-victory trajectory' that was common to many nineteenth-century symphonic works.<sup>98</sup> As we shall see, this trajectory is certainly present in *Tintagel*, though with some significant modifications (most notably, the work does not follow a minor-to-major-mode trajectory).

The 'restless mood' that Bax mentions in his programme may be considered to begin during bars 56–67 (particularly from b. 64). Since these bars come after the essential expositional closure but before the start of the development, they are best viewed in terms of Sonata Theory as part of a closing zone. Although their function seems to be mostly

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 133, 147. Christopher Whelen has observed that there is frequently a 'feminine element' to the secondary themes in the first movements of Bax's symphonies. He also notes that Bax's primary and secondary themes are often 'opposed like warring planets'. Whelen, 'Bax's Symphonic Architecture – *Byzantium*' in Andrews (ed.), *Cuchulan Among The Guns*, 87–95 at 87.

<sup>96</sup> Hepokoski also suggests earlier progenitors of this formal model, such as Weber's Overture to *Der Freischütz* and Beethoven's Overture to *Egmont*. James Hepokoski, 'Masculine—Feminine', *Musical Times*, 135 (1994), 494–9.

<sup>97</sup> Hepokoski, 'Beethoven Reception', 448; Hepokoski, 'Masculine—Feminine', 498.

<sup>98</sup> Hepokoski, 'Beethoven Reception', 448–9; Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 147; Hepokoski, 'Masculine—Feminine', 498; Darcy, 'Bruckner's Sonata Deformations', 259. There are further specific parallels between *Tintagel* and the Overture to *Holländer*. The secondary theme in the latter also cadences in the tonic key (though it is a half cadence), and both works are, to some extent, depictions of the sea. Steven Vande Moortele writes that 'on a deeper structural level, the entire exposition [of the *Holländer* overture] resides firmly in the tonic'. Vande Moortele, 'Form, Narrative and Intertextuality in Wagner's Overture to *Der Fliegende Holländer*', *Music Analysis*, 32 (2013), 46–79 at 57. Aidan Thomson writes that Bax's Fourth Symphony also seems to 'uphold the Romantic symphonic paradigm of *per aspera ad astra*'. Thomson, 'Bax's "Sea Symphony"'.

interludial, this music does reaffirm the key of the EEC (in this case the tonic)—as closing zones normatively do—in bar 63 with another modified IAC (this time a minor chord v moving to I). One might argue, however, that the restless mood really begins within the secondary-theme zone at bar 45, where Wagnerian chromaticism creeps in for the first time (Ex. 4).<sup>99</sup> The descending chromatic motion at bars 45–6—particularly in the bass line and the inner parts—anticipates the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif that permeates the development, and there is even an allusion to the opening of the *Tristan* Prelude in bars 46<sup>3</sup>–8<sup>2</sup>.

[INSERT EX. 4 HERE]

The appearance of the secondary theme at bar 68, now in bVI (G major) and accompanied by fragments (in the flutes) of the ostinato arpeggio figures that were earlier heard in the violins in the introduction and with the primary theme, provides a strong signal that we have entered the development, or ‘developmental space’.<sup>100</sup> Another statement of this theme between bars 80–4, this time in i (B minor) and accompanied more clearly now by the ostinato figure from the introduction, further reinforces the sense that this is the beginning of the development. While, historically, a more normative option for the development was to begin with a version of the primary theme and to continue with an ordered presentation of motivic material that corresponds with the exposition (a ‘rotational’ development),<sup>101</sup> it was not abnormal (certainly not in Bax’s time) to have a nonrotational developmental space beginning with the secondary theme.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, the music between bars 68–84 could be considered to function as one of the four normative types of developmental ‘zones’ posited by Hepokoski and Darcy: an ‘*entry or preparation zone*’, which is followed by the next normative zone, ‘the central action-space’.<sup>103</sup> The sense of ‘entry or preparation’ stems from

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<sup>99</sup> In an interview in 1921, Bax claimed that ‘the contrapuntal basis’ of his harmony was exemplified by Wagner’s music: ‘my harmonies come about as the result of contrapuntal movement. It’s no use thinking in up and down blocks of harmony if you’re trying to read my things: each part must be taken as a melodic line’. Katharine E. Eggar, ‘The Piano Pieces of Arnold Bax’, *Music Student*, 14 (Nov. 1921), 65–7, 78. Reprinted in Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 161–2.

<sup>100</sup> As the motivic material of the majority (notwithstanding the opening) of this development is not based on expositional ideas, ‘developmental space’ is the more appropriate term here, as it ‘does not imply the inescapable presence of thematic back-reference’. Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 196.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Rotational structures are those that extend through musical space by recycling one or more times—with appropriate alterations and adjustments—a referential thematic pattern established as an ordered succession at the piece’s outset’. See *ibid.* 611–14.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* 205–7, 216.

<sup>103</sup> These four zones (‘not all of which need to be deployed in any given work’) may be summarised as follows: the first zone is a ‘short, optional *link* from the preceding retransition (RT) or from the last module of C’; the second is the ‘*entry or preparation zone*’; the third is ‘*the central action or set of actions*’, or ‘central action-space’; and the fourth is the ‘*exit or retransition*’. *Ibid.* 229–30.

the largely *piano* dynamic level in this section and the still, static mood engendered by the sustained pedal notes and chords accompanying the occurrences of the secondary theme.

The music between the two developmental statements of the secondary theme introduces two chromatic motifs which dominate the remainder of the developmental space: the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif and a one-bar motif I have labelled ‘Conflict’, for reasons outlined below. As Bax stated in his programme, the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif is found (predominantly) in Act I of *Tristan und Isolde*, specifically during Isolde’s narrative, in which she recalls events that took place before the start of the drama.<sup>104</sup> In *Tristan* the motif is found in two forms, which Alfred Lorenz labelled as ‘Stormy’ and ‘Mild’.<sup>105</sup> Typical statements of these two variants of the motif are shown in Exx. 5a and 5b.<sup>106</sup> Bax’s initial use of the motif (Ex. 6) retains the characteristic descending chromatic motion and dotted rhythm of Wagner’s, but its harmonisation is markedly different. In *Tristan* the motif tends to lead to a cadence—interrupted, perfect, or half. By contrast, in Ex. 6 the parallel chromatic motion of the half-diminished seventh chords, above an E pedal, create a sense of tonal ambiguity. Although in vertical isolation these half-diminished seventh chords reinforce the *Tristan* connection, considered horizontally this music has more in common with Debussy than Wagner.

[INSERT EXX. 5a, 5b, AND 6 HERE]

Debussy’s influence is apparent in other parts of the work as well. The brass fanfares and accompanying swirling string figures of the primary theme in *Tintagel* clearly owe something to both the end of the first movement, and the music between figures 49 and 51 of the third movement, of Debussy’s *La Mer*. Moreover, the third movement of *La Mer*, a depiction of an ‘animated and tumultuous’ wind and sea—much like the stormy central section of *Tintagel*—also alludes to Wagner’s ‘Sick Tristan’ motif (particularly apparent just after fig. 51). Given the prominence of the sea in *Tristan*, especially in the first act, it follows that Debussy and Bax alluded to this particular motif in works associated with the sea.<sup>107</sup> By the time he composed *Tintagel*, sea music had already become something of a recurring

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<sup>104</sup> Hans von Wolzogen seems to have been the first to assign the motif this label, describing it as ‘Motiv des siechen Tristan’. Hans von Wolzogen, *Richard Wagners Tristan und Isolde. Ein Zeitfaden durch Sage, Dichtung und Musik* (Leipzig, 1880).

<sup>105</sup> Matthew Brown, ‘Isolde’s Narrative: From Hauptmotiv to Tonal Model’, in Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (eds.), *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner* (Berkeley and London, 1989), 180–201

<sup>106</sup> In the following references to Wagner’s music, the format 00/0/0 refers to the page number, system number, and bar number in the Schirmer vocal score of *Tristan und Isolde*.

<sup>107</sup> Delius also alludes to the motif in his *Sea Drift* (1903–4), at the words ‘O I am very sick and sorrowful’, just before fig. 23. And Elgar refers to it in *The Kingdom* (1906) to represent the lame man in Scene IV (see fig. 128ff). See Christopher Palmer, *Delius: A Portrait of a Cosmopolitan* (London, 1976), 152.

‘topic’ in Bax’s music, one that Derrick Puffett suggests first appeared in the song ‘At Last’ from the 1904 *Celtic Song Cycle*.<sup>108</sup> Puffett describes the sea music in *The Garden of Fand*, along with its themes of ‘revelry’ and ‘amorous song’, as ‘types’ (I use the term ‘topic’ instead), and suggests that when these topics reappear in later works ‘we remember not just the work [*Fand*] but the programme that goes with it’.<sup>109</sup> Puffett continues: ‘*Fand* can thus be used to interpret the later work’.<sup>110</sup> As we shall see, this intertextual approach can be fruitful in interpretations of the work that go beyond the ‘seascape’ reading.

As the developmental space unfolds, various aspects of the music would have identified it as developmental to Bax’s contemporary audience. Many of the characteristics and techniques listed by Hepokoski and Darcy as typical of developments, and particularly of the central action-space of a development, can be found here.<sup>111</sup> There is, for example, a mood of ‘surging restlessness’ throughout, a move to the minor at bar 80, imitative textures which permeate the section, fragmentary unit lengths, and, for the most part, a sense of tonal instability. Particularly striking—and developmental—is the fugato-like music based on the ‘Sick-Tristan’ motif that starts at bar 95 but which soon ‘dissolv[es] into other types of developmental activity’.<sup>112</sup> Immediately following this there is some sequential treatment of material: the ‘Conflict’ motif is heard at bar 109, and then begins to be repeated up a semitone at bar 113, before quickly dissolving into less distinctive material. There are also a number of local build-ups of tension (or ‘intensification-drives’), culminating with climactic tutti fortissimo outbursts (bb. 93, 122, 138, 142), sometimes sustained for a few bars, then dying away again before moving on to a new accumulation of energy. Finally, there is a sense of dissolution, or ‘winding-down’, at the end of the central action-space: after the climax at bar 142 the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif is fragmented (b. 144) and then the music gradually fades to nothing but a low rumble by bars 152–3.

The tempo and textural change at bar 154 signals that the music has left the central action-space of the development and entered a new phase. Initially, at least, the function of this new section seems formally ambiguous, the music suggesting both a return (recapitulation) and further development. The music between bars 154–189 consists of two

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<sup>108</sup> Puffett, ‘In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the “Celtic Twilight”’, 196. For a more recent and stimulating discussion of Bax’s relationship with the sea, see Thomson, ‘Bax’s “Sea Symphony”’.

<sup>109</sup> Puffett, ‘In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the “Celtic Twilight”’, 202. Aidan Thomson describes these recurring themes as ‘archetypes’. Thomson, ‘Bax and the “Celtic North”’, 70.

<sup>110</sup> Puffett, ‘In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the “Celtic Twilight”’, 202.

<sup>111</sup> Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 196, 230.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* 230.



parallel eighteen-bar sections. The first begins with a new ostinato figure in the flutes, which, though much darker than the ostinato that accompanies the primary theme in the exposition, suggests a parallel with the opening of the piece. The primary theme is soon heard in Eb minor above a sustained pedal C, creating a half-diminished (Tristan) chord effect. This is followed by a crescendo culminating with a fortissimo 6/4 F major chord at bar 168, described in Bax's programme as the 'great climax, suddenly subsiding'. The second eighteen-bar section follows the same pattern: first there is the primary theme, now in Ab minor and above a Cb/B pedal, then a crescendo and climax at bar 186—the moment described by Bax as the waves 'smash[ing] themselves upon the impregnable rocks'. In some respects, this music still sounds developmental: there are two intensification-drives, achieved in part by the urgent rising semiquavers just before each climax which recall bars 136–7 of the development. This section might, then, initially be heard as functioning as the last normative developmental zone identified by Hepokoski and Darcy: 'the *exit* or *retransition*'. While there is no conventional 'structural-dominant lock' here to prepare for the recapitulation and the home key, there is certainly a sense of striving to get back, reinforced by the intensifying wave imagery of Bax's programmatic description and the pedal note in the bass that moves down from C to Cb, which then turns into a B, heightening the sense of imminent return to the home key.

Following the second climactic crash of waves, the secondary theme returns, as does the home key of B major (though initially over a dominant pedal).<sup>113</sup> The bypassing of a tonic recapitulation of the primary theme, skipping straight to the secondary theme, may cause a retrospective reinterpretation of the 'retransition' as a nontonic beginning of a recapitulatory rotation.<sup>114</sup> This withholding of the tonic key until the recapitulation of the secondary theme is a common sonata-form deformation that developed during the nineteenth century; Hepokoski writes that it was 'possible to bypass the tonic recapitulation of the first theme, merging into the "tonal resolution" only at or around the point of the second theme'.<sup>115</sup> The return of the secondary theme ('the theme of the sea is heard again'), now transformed into a fortissimo orchestral tutti, constitutes the climax of the entire piece and the moment—the

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<sup>113</sup> Parallels might again be drawn with the Overture to *Der Fliegende Holländer*, in which, Steven Vande Moortele notes, the 'conceptual space' for the jubilant recapitulation of the secondary theme is 'wrenched open' by the primary theme-based music of the preceding bars. Vande Moortele, 'Form, Narrative and Intertextuality in Wagner's Overture to *Der Fliegende Holländer*', 57.

<sup>114</sup> In terms of Sonata Theory, this interpretation makes much more sense than claiming that the recapitulation begins at the return of the secondary theme at b. 190. Hepokoski and Darcy claim that a recapitulation cannot begin with an S-module. See Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 231–2.

<sup>115</sup> Hepokoski, 'Beethoven Reception', 452.

*telos*—that the whole development and start of the recapitulation have been working towards (the hermeneutic implications of this crucial moment in the work are considered in more detail below).

The secondary theme soon merges into a new statement of the primary theme at bar 198, now returned to its expositional grandeur, though beginning in the subdominant key of E major.<sup>116</sup> Initially, this may be heard as a ‘rotational restart’ that ushers in a coda,<sup>117</sup> but by the *Molto Largamente* at bar 210, the primary theme has run its course, and the recapitulatory rotation resumes—and concludes—with a transformed version of the music from the exposition’s closing zone (bb. 210–17 roughly parallel bb. 56–63). Thus, the appearance of P at bar 198, disrupting the expected P-S-C rotation (instead becoming P-S-P-C), is more likely heard as an interpolation—possibly a deformational ‘coda-rhetoric interpolation’—in an otherwise normative rotation.<sup>118</sup>

Although B major is clearly established during the secondary theme and is once again reached at the first chord of bar 210, there is no clear IAC or PAC in that key, and thus no obvious point of ‘essential structural closure’. Bars 209–10 could be considered a “‘modern’ substitute’ for a PAC,<sup>119</sup> but the strength of the resolution there is immediately undermined by the chromatic descent in some of the parts, leading to an F# minor chord over a B pedal (unlike the analogous b. 27 in the exposition where the B major chord is sustained). As the recapitulation fails to achieve the essential structural closure, it may be considered an example of what Hepokoski has termed the ‘nonresolving recapitulation’—another common sonata deformation found in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century works.<sup>120</sup> It is, however, a mild form of this deformation; the tonic key is clearly apparent in the recapitulation, but it is not secured by way of a I:PAC or a satisfactory alternative. Hepokoski notes that such recapitulations create ‘a sense of unease, alienation, futility, recapitulatory failure, or the

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<sup>116</sup> The move to the subdominant here is not particularly problematic as it merely parallels the brief tonicisation of E major in the exposition (at b. 43), and after four bars (the presentation) the continuation part of the sentence pushes the music back to the tonic, B major (clearly reached at the start of b. 210).

<sup>117</sup> Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 412.

<sup>118</sup> A ‘coda-rhetoric interpolation’ involves a composer interpolating a passage of ‘coda-rhetoric material’, which could include ‘a return to the normative P’ (as in *Tintagel*), before all of the ‘recapitulatory modules have been sounded’. This would typically occur during a recapitulation of the closing zone, but can also appear during the secondary-theme zone, as I suggest here. See *ibid.* 288.

<sup>119</sup> Writing about Strauss’s *Till Eulenspiegel*, Hepokoski suggests that ‘the gradual settling on F major [at the end of the recapitulation] is Strauss’s “modern” substitute for that traditional effect [the essential structural closure]’. Hepokoski, ‘Framing *Till Eulenspiegel*’, 37.

<sup>120</sup> Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 245–7. For more work that considers this deformation, see Hepokoski, ‘Back and Forth from Egmont: Beethoven, Mozart, and the Nonresolving Recapitulation’, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 25 (2001–2), 127–54; *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, 94–5 (n. 17); Harper-Scott, ‘Elgar’s Invention of the Human: *Falstaff*, Opus 68’, 238, 251–2.

like', but the resolution, 'though dramatically delayed, is normally accomplished ... in a special coda space'.<sup>121</sup> In *Tintagel*, a resolution is indeed achieved in the short coda, with the V–I motion at bars 227–8—'the piece ends as it began, with a picture of the castle still proudly fronting the sun and wind of centuries'.

There is no need to doubt the seascape narrative of *Tintagel* provided by Bax. Nonetheless, certain aspects of the work, such as the tonal unity of the exposition, the nontonic opening of the recapitulation, and the disruptive intrusion of the 'Sick Tristan' music immediately before the closing bars of the coda, invite further hermeneutic interpretation. The 'Irish' reading of *Tintagel* set out below will offer an interpretation of these deformational and remarkable aspects of the work. First, however, it is worth considering the 'Cohen' reading in a little more detail than it has been up till now, particularly as it intersects in significant ways with both the 'seascape' and 'Irish' readings of *Tintagel* described here.

#### *The 'Cohen' Reading*

Fundamental to the 'Cohen' reading is the work's connections with the legend of Tristan and Iseult, particularly with Wagner's version of the story. In this reading of *Tintagel* the significance of the 'Sick Tristan' motif seems obvious: Bax alluded to Wagner's drama simply because he saw parallels between the love story of *Tristan und Isolde* and his own love affair with Cohen. Moreover, Bax, who often comes across as a self-pitying character in his correspondence, might well have identified with sick Tristan and thus also with the eponymous motif. That Bax saw his relationship with Cohen through a Wagnerian or Tristanesque lens is demonstrated by some of his correspondence with Cohen and by a poem he wrote shortly before composing *Tintagel*, named 'Tintagel Castle'.<sup>122</sup> The poem, told from the perspective of two modern-day lovers, refers to the legend of 'Tristram and Iseult' and highlights the universality of their love story: 'We have a certain token / How hearts of old were broken; / And English, Celt or Norman, / Love hurt them still the same'. The third stanza refers to 'the dream their world denied': their true love which is prohibited by the laws and conventions of society. Bax expressed a similar sentiment in a letter to Cohen, dating from 1 September 1917 (shortly before he wrote the poem and tone poem):

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<sup>121</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, 94–5 (n. 17).

<sup>122</sup> This poem was initially published in the anonymous *Love Poems of a Musician* (London, 1923). It is reprinted in Scott-Sutherland (ed.), *Ideala: Love Letters and Poems of Arnold Bax*, 237; and in Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 160–1. Like *Tintagel*, the poem is dedicated to Harriet Cohen.

I don't care what the mean dirty world says or does to me as long as you love me and I can help you at all[.] The world will always revel in taking the basest view of the relationships of men and women.<sup>123</sup>

In both the poem and the letter, Bax presents love in a distinctly Wagnerian fashion; the natural law of love is cast in opposition to the unnatural laws of society, such as the institution of marriage.<sup>124</sup> Bax aligns his own circumstances with those found in *Tristan und Isolde*, in which the principal characters' real, forbidden love contrasts with the planned forced marriage between Isolde and King Marke. Similarly, in *Die Walküre* the genuine—but prohibited and incestuous—love between Siegmund and Sieglinde is opposed to the latter's abusive and loveless, but nonetheless societally-approved, marriage to Hunding.<sup>125</sup>

The reference to 'the dream' denied by the 'world' in Bax's poem suggests not only the Wagnerian (Feuerbachian) opposition between love and law, but also the dreams/reality dichotomy within which Bax often framed his own life and experiences. Cohen, whom Bax first met in the Dublin Mountains—something of a mystical place for Bax—was very much a part of his dream-world.<sup>126</sup> As noted above, Bax would have encountered the theme of division between everyday reality and some higher realm in Celtic mythology and Theosophy, but it was perhaps in Wagner's *Tristan* where he first came into contact with such ideas. In Act II of *Tristan*, Wagner uses the symbolism of 'day' and 'night' to represent, on the one hand, Schopenhauer's phenomenal world of appearances, and on the other hand, the noumenal world-in-itself, in which the lovers can literally become one.<sup>127</sup> Bryan Magee observes that all three acts begin with sounds from the external, phenomenal world (represented by 'day' in Act II). As each act progresses, however, it becomes more focussed on Tristan and Isolde's inner world (represented by the 'night' in Act II). At the end of the

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<sup>123</sup> British Library, MS Mus. 1653.

<sup>124</sup> See Barry Emslie, *Richard Wagner and the Centrality of Love* (Woodbridge, 2010), 32. Wagner's conception of love owed much to the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach. Carl Dahlhaus considers the importance of the opposition between law and love (or freedom) in Wagner's works in *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge, 1979), 81, 89–94.

<sup>125</sup> Bryan Magee writes that, from Wagner's perspective, Sieglinde's marriage to Hunding was a 'sort of institutionalized rape'. Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London, 2001), 118.

<sup>126</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 73. Bax's brother remarked that Bax 'had a strong sense ... of something mysterious within mountains and lakes and forests' (ibid. xxv). Bax often referred to Cohen with terms of affection such as 'elfin child', 'faery lover' and 'my Deirdre', thus associating her with her with the mythical characters of his beloved 'Celtic wonderland'.

<sup>127</sup> Bryan Magee, 'Schopenhauer and Wagner: Part Two', *Opera Quarterly*, 1 (1983), 50–73 at 56–8; Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, 'Death Drive: Eros and Thanatos in Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde"', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 11 (1999), 267–93 at 277; Roger Scruton, *Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde* (Oxford, 2004), 130; Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 216.

first two acts, however, ‘the external world comes crashing in ... to catastrophic effect’.<sup>128</sup> In Act I, for example, Tristan and Isolde’s inner dialogue is interrupted by the shouts of the sailors and their ship’s arrival in Cornwall. In this case, the opposition between the inner and outer worlds is also represented by the use of mainly chromatic music in Tristan and Isolde’s inner dialogue, and diatonic music, like the C major at the end of the Act, to represent the external world of the sailors and the cliffs of Cornwall.

In *Tintagel* there is a similar sense of an inner world framed by an outer one. The largely diatonic music of the exposition and recapitulation, perhaps representative of an external world—the sea and the castle—encapsulates the chromatic inner world of the development. The music of the development, then, might symbolize Bax’s personal emotions at the time of his affair,<sup>129</sup> and the conflict between a sense of ‘domestic responsibility’ and his feelings of illicit sexual desire towards Cohen.<sup>130</sup> Both at the end of *Tristan*’s first act and at the climactic recapitulatory statement of the secondary theme in *Tintagel*, it is Tintagel Castle, the cliffs of Cornwall, and the sea that burst in and sweep the inner world away.

As Christopher Palmer has observed, for Wagner, Debussy, Delius, and Bax (all of whom alluded to the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif in their works), the sea was symbolically linked to ‘feelings of sexual desire and passion’. Palmer notes that this association is particularly ‘explicit’ in Bax’s *The Garden of Fand*.<sup>131</sup> Given Puffett’s suggestion that *Fand* can be used to interpret later works that contain the same musical topics (such as sea music),<sup>132</sup> it is significant that *Fand* is also structured in such a way as to suggest a dream-world framed by an external world. According to Bax’s programme for the work (printed at the beginning of the score), it begins, like *Tintagel*, with a depiction of the Atlantic Ocean. Sailing on the ocean is a small ship which is soon thrown by a huge wave ‘on to the shore of Fand’s miraculous island’, the Celtic ‘Otherworld’:

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<sup>128</sup> Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, 217–18.

<sup>129</sup> Bax once wrote that his music is ‘the expression of emotional states’. Bax, “‘I am a Brazen Romantic’: Bax Defines his Music”, *Musical America*, 7 July 1928, 9. Reprinted in Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 168.

<sup>130</sup> Lewis Foreman detects the presence of this conflict in *November Woods* also. See Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 164. Although Bax seems to have cared little for his wife by this point, he did not want his mother to find out about his affair, and wished to avoid a ‘scandal’. See Elnaes, ‘An Anglo-Irish Composer’, 123.

<sup>131</sup> Palmer, *Delius: A Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 152.

<sup>132</sup> This may seem like a rather bold claim were it not for the crucial position *Fand* occupies in Bax’s output. Puffett writes that *Fand* ‘is a fruitful source for his later music; we might almost call it his key work’, while Thomson notes that ‘the seeds of Bax’s later style were sown most effectively’ in *Fand*. Bax himself evidently regarded it as an important work, once remarking to Harriet Cohen that *Fand* was the ‘last of [his] Irish music’. Puffett, ‘In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the “Celtic Twilight”’, 203; Thomson, ‘Bax and the “Celtic North”’, 70; Cohen, *A Bundle of Time: The Memoirs of Harriet Cohen*, 37.

Here is unhuman revelry unceasing between the ends of time, and the voyagers [from the ship] are caught away, unresisting, into the maze of the dance. A pause comes, and Fand sings her song of immortal love, enchaining the hearts of her hearers forever. The dancing and the feasting begin again, and, finally, the sea rising suddenly overwhelms the whole island, the immortals riding in rapture on the green and golden waves, and laughing carelessly amidst the foam at the fate of the over-rash mortals lost in the depths. Twilight falls, the sea subsides, and Fand's garden fades out of sight.

The programme thus outlines a story that involves leaving the real world (the mortal humans on their ship in the Atlantic), entering a dream-world (Fand's island), and finally returning to the real world (the Otherworld 'fades out of sight'). This is reflected in the work's ABCBA structure: the B sections represent the unceasing revelry; C is Fand's song of immortal love; and the A sections, framing the orgiastic central episodes, depict the Atlantic Ocean. The central developmental space of *Tintagel*, then, might also be interpreted as a visit to the Otherworld, or rather some kind of *other world*, with all its sexual associations.<sup>133</sup>

However, this Tristanesque dream-framed-by-reality interpretation of *Tintagel* is problematic. Bax regarded 'dreams', as he regarded Cohen, as an escape from the harsh realities of a material world. The developmental space of *Tintagel*, however, is more like a nightmare than a dream, and the outer sections suggest less a harsh reality than an ideal realm. One might be tempted, then, to invert the reading outlined above. Now, the chromatic music of the development is the harsh reality (Bax's 'mental turmoil')<sup>134</sup> intruding upon the dream-world, represented by the diatonic themes of the exposition and recapitulation. The 'Sick Tristan' motif signifies Bax, the wounded hero, striving to overcome adversity. This he eventually achieves at the apotheosis of the secondary theme, representing in this reading the triumph of the dream and of his love for Cohen.<sup>135</sup> It is no coincidence that Bax chose the key of B major for *Tintagel*, the same key used to depict Tristan and Isolde's blissful dissolution into the oneness of the noumenal realm at the end of *Tristan*. However, this reading, too, is problematic. While the recapitulation of the secondary theme provides a release of tension and a return to B major, the resolution is undermined, to some extent, by the F# dominant

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<sup>133</sup> In Celtic mythology the entrance to the Otherworld was commonly thought to be found somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean. See Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, 333; and MacKillop, *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, 359. Aidan Thomson notes that for Bax the sea was, in part, 'a metaphor for a world beyond civilization'. Thomson, 'Bax's "Sea Symphony"'.  
<sup>134</sup> Webber, 'Tintagel on Record'.

<sup>135</sup> Some versions of the 'Cohen' reading of the work suggest that the secondary theme is the 'love-theme'. See, for example, Webber 'Tintagel on Record'; and Hannam, 'Arnold Bax and the Poetry of Tintagel', 72.

pedal that underpins it.<sup>136</sup> This, along with the recapitulation's 'failure' to achieve the essential structural closure, the loss of momentum at the end of the recapitulation and in the coda, and, above all, the eerie return of the 'Sick Tristan' motif at bars 220–3, seems to question the triumph of the secondary theme's recapitulation.

In *Unsung Voices* Carolyn Abbate argues that 'to see how music might narrate ... we must see how it does *not* enact actions from a non-musical world, but is instead non-congruent with that world in retelling it'.<sup>137</sup> The four bars just mentioned are certainly non-congruent with Bax's seascape narrative, which suggests that the end of the piece simply returns to a serene picture of the castle and the sea. Abbate also proposes that a narrative voice in music often seems as though it is 'speaking from elsewhere' and has a 'bizarre and disruptive effect'.<sup>138</sup> She writes that 'awareness of the "narrating voice" draws our attention from places that house coherence to places where ... displacements occur'.<sup>139</sup> The appearance of the 'Sick Tristan' motif in the coda, especially the second statement of it in bars 222–3, is surely a moment that meets all of these criteria. This music (bb. 222–3) is certainly disruptive; it interrupts the sense of a return to stability created by the S<sup>1.0</sup> figure, and it stands out at this point of the piece because the motif is otherwise entirely confined to the developmental space (as is most of the chromatic music).<sup>140</sup> The orchestration of these two bars is also distinctive; the other-worldly sound created by the tremolo strings, the murky clarinets, bass clarinet, and bassoons, and the sighing figure (a modified version of the 'Sick Tristan' motif) in the cellos and cor anglais, occurs nowhere else in the work. For Abbate, moments like this are unique because, despite sensing a narrative mode, 'we do not know *what* it narrates'.<sup>141</sup> Nonetheless, we can speculate as to what the meaning of this distinctive utterance might be. Do these bars represent Bax's troublesome reality intruding once more on his dream-world? Or might they constitute a dying memory of some passionate encounters with Cohen in Cornwall during September 1917? There certainly seems to be something

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<sup>136</sup> This denied resolution, ultimately achieved at the end of the work, is like a microscopic version of a similar process played out over the last two acts of *Tristan*. At the end of scene II, Act II—the end of Tristan and Isolde's night-time tryst—the anticipated resolution of twelve bars of dominant pedal on F# is denied by one of the most jarring interruptions of the external world in the whole drama: Kurvenal bursts in on the lovers to warn them that Melot and Marke are approaching. As in *Tintagel*, the resolution to B major, avoided at this earlier stage in the drama, is ultimately achieved at the very end of the work.

<sup>137</sup> Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 27.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 29.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>140</sup> S<sup>1.0</sup> is Hepokoski and Darcy's terminology for a 'preparatory module that sets up or otherwise precedes what strikes one as the "real" initial theme of the zone. ... The lightest type of S<sup>1.0</sup>-effect occurs when an accompanimental figure, vamp, or rhythmic stream is laid down in advance of the S-theme proper'. Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 142.

<sup>141</sup> Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 27.

deeply personal about this music, but to further elucidate what this uncanny voice could be narrating we might look beyond Bax's love life.

### *An 'Irish' Reading*

There can be no doubt that *Tintagel* is a Celtic work. Even before the Second World War it was described by some critics as a 'Cornish-Celtic tone-poem', and Derrick Puffett has argued that all works after *Fand* containing any one of its topics of revelry, amorous song, or the sea are given, 'by association, an authentically Celtic stamp'.<sup>142</sup> Bax himself clearly recognized the Celtic associations of *Tintagel*. In a letter to Cohen from 11 September 1917, he wrote of the 'old old Celtic mood that this forgotten bit of Cornwall has kept through the ages'.<sup>143</sup> As Bax understood it, Cornwall, like Ireland, had retained its Celtic identity long after the beginning of the Roman Conquest and thus represented the same kind of relic of an ideal ancient past, a dream-world into which he could escape from the materialistic reality of modern-day England. To what extent, then, can *Tintagel* also be considered an Irish work? A 'Celtic stamp' in Bax's music does not invariably equate to an Irish stamp, but in the case of *Tintagel* I propose that it does.

Although *Tintagel* was composed over a year after the Easter Rising, Bax was still preoccupied with Irish politics in 1917. This is evidenced by two of the poems that form part of his collection *A Dublin Ballad and Other Poems* (1918): 'The East Clare Election: 1917' and 'The East Clare Election: 1828–1917'.<sup>144</sup> Just three months before Bax composed *Tintagel*, Eamon de Valera, the only leader of the Easter rebels not to be executed, stood as Sinn Féin's candidate in the East Clare by-election and won, beating the more moderate Irish Parliamentary Party's candidate, Patrick Lynch.<sup>145</sup> Bax's two poems on this subject certainly suggest that he looked favourably upon the growing support for Sinn Féin, who would go on to win a landslide victory in the 1918 general election.<sup>146</sup> In the first line of the second poem, for example, the result of the by-election is described as a 'day of victory'. In both poems,

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<sup>142</sup> Leigh Henry, 'The Celt in Music', *Musical Quarterly*, 19 (1933), 401–16 at 414; Edwin Evans, 'Arnold Bax', *Musical Quarterly*, 9 (1923), 167–80 at 171; Puffett, 'In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the "Celtic Twilight"', 202.

<sup>143</sup> British Library, MS Mus. 1653.

<sup>144</sup> Scott-Sutherland (ed.), *Ideala: Love Letters and Poems of Arnold Bax*, 242–3.

<sup>145</sup> Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London, 2006), 331.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* 342–3.



Bax seems to express hope that there might be a new Irish Republic on the horizon, writing of ‘the Ireland that is to be’ and ‘an Ireland built anew’.<sup>147</sup>

The additional date in the title of the second poem—1828—refers to another by-election which took place in Clare, which saw the victory of Daniel O’Connell, referred to as ‘Old Dan’ in Bax’s poem. O’Connell founded the Catholic Association in 1823, an organisation which campaigned for Catholic Emancipation. One of the aims of the Association was to earn Catholics the right to sit in parliament at Westminster. Thanks in large part to O’Connell and his victory in the Clare by-election, this goal was achieved with the passing of the Catholic Relief Act in 1829.<sup>148</sup> Although generally regarded as an Irish hero and often referred to as ‘The Liberator’, Bax’s poem criticizes O’Connell for not going far enough in his attempt to free Ireland from its English oppressors. The third stanza states that ‘Old Dan’ ‘drove our minds from Cruachan’, a fortress in Connacht, known in Celtic mythology as the home of Queen Medb,<sup>149</sup> ‘To the dark House of Lies on Thames’ (the Houses of Parliament). The meaning (to be inferred from the poem) would seem to be that rather than diverting the Irish people’s attention towards London, O’Connell should have been focussing on bringing about an Irish state completely independent from British rule. In contrast to O’Connell’s ‘abhorrence of violence’,<sup>150</sup> Bax’s poetry seems to espouse the kind of blood-drenched revolution attempted by Pearse and the other rebels of 1916. The pro-republican sentiment expressed in all the poems in the volume is strong; they certainly have more than a mere ‘republican hue’.<sup>151</sup>

Considering that Bax’s poetry from this time was so explicitly concerned with Ireland, it does not seem unreasonable to identify an implicit Irish programme in *Tintagel*. This is not to say that Bax necessarily intended such a programme, though that is not implausible. As David Clarke has argued, supporting hermeneutic readings of a work with evidence from the composer’s own life or work

need not be seen as a reversion to quasi-positivism or the intentional fallacy. It is rather to widen the frame of what is permitted to inform our understanding of musical meaning, neither

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<sup>147</sup> The new Ireland Bax speaks of in his poetry is an imagined one, not to be confused with the Irish Free State which was not established until 1922.

<sup>148</sup> Thompson, *The Imagination of an Insurrection*, 33–5.

<sup>149</sup> MacKillop, *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, 113.

<sup>150</sup> Thompson, *The Imagination of an Insurrection*, 35.

<sup>151</sup> Thomson, ‘Bax and the “Celtic North”’, 74.

denying the agency of the interpreting subject, nor making a fetish of compositional intent, but rather tempering the signifying free play of the former in the ground of the latter.<sup>152</sup>

The case for considering *Tintagel* an Irish work is further supported by the distinctly Irish connotations of both the secondary theme and the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif.

Hitherto, little consideration has been given to the context in which the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif originally appears in *Tristan*, nor what this entails for an interpretation of Bax’s ostensible seascape. As noted above, the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif permeates Isolde’s narrative in Act I, in which she tells of the events leading up to the start of the drama: Tristan, ‘a sick and ailing man ... dying in misery’, arrives on Ireland’s shore, disguised as ‘Tantris’. Isolde, an Irish princess with ‘healing ointments and soothing lotions’, tends to his wounds. Isolde soon realizes Tristan’s true identity: he is the man who killed her fiancée, the Irish knight Morold. She ‘stood ready to take revenge on [Tristan] for Sir Morold’s death’, but when their eyes meet she is unable to do so. Instead, she permits him to leave, on the condition that he never return to Ireland. Tristan, however, breaks his promise: ‘he brazenly returned as Tristan ... to claim the Irish heiress as a bride for Cornwall’s weary king—for Marke, his uncle’.<sup>153</sup>

Whether or not Bax recognized the motif’s Irish connections, we cannot know for sure. It may be a coincidence that the only place in the first act of *Tristan* where a version of the motif begins on an F#—as it does when it is first stated in *Tintagel* (Ex. 6)—occurs exactly on the word ‘Ireland’ (Ex. 7). This statement of the motif comes at the climax of Isolde’s narrative, just before the curse, when she is imitating what Tristan might have said to King Marke upon his return to Cornwall: ‘I’ll hasten to Ireland and Isolde shall be yours!’.<sup>154</sup> The first two bars of Ex. 7 are actually closer to Bax’s version of the motif—which rises at the end—than the more typical versions of ‘Sick Tristan’ shown in Exx. 5a and 5b.

[INSERT EX. 7 HERE]

Not only, then, is the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif associated with Ireland, but it is linked to the conflict between the people of Ireland and Cornwall. Specifically, many of the events recounted in Isolde’s narrative are concerned with Cornwall’s dominance and exertion of power over Ireland. Although in *Tristan* the Cornish are a Celtic people, Bax might well have

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<sup>152</sup> David Clarke, ‘Between Hermeneutics and Formalism: The Lento from Tippett’s Concerto for Orchestra (Or: Music Analysis after Lawrence Kramer)’, *Music Analysis*, 30 (2011), 309–59 at 348–9.

<sup>153</sup> Translation of the libretto taken from Peter Bassett, *Richard Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde: Complete Text with Original Stage Directions* (Kent Town, 2006), 39.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

perceived some parallels between the oppression of the Irish by the Cornish Celts in Wagner's music drama and the oppression of the Irish by the English in the early twentieth century. In both the mythological events of *Tristan* and the real-life events of 1916, Ireland is subjugated to the position of England's feminine 'Other' and its autonomy is crushed.

It is significant that Isolde, the character representative of Ireland in *Tristan*, is female. As noted above, Ireland and the Irish were often characterized by the English as dreamy and feminine in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Bax bought into these stereotypes. Ireland and Cohen were closely associated in Bax's mind; both represented a similar world of escapist fantasy. Ireland was the place where Bax's 'dream became localized', and he wrote that while living there he 'was in love with Ireland and for the while needed no mortal mistress'.<sup>155</sup> When Bax wrote to Cohen in Easter Week 1916, he described her as 'the symbol of Ireland':

I suppose because the quality of my feelings for both of you is rather similar, for Ireland always was to me a living breathing spirit. I can feel her heart beating when I lie on her hill-sides—like a woman's heart but more tender and noble than that of most of the world's women.<sup>156</sup>

Taking into account Bax's decidedly feminine portrayal of Ireland, let us propose that the 'feminine' secondary theme of *Tintagel's* 'gendered two-block exposition' is representative not just of the sea or love, but also of Ireland. The Irishness of the theme is suggested by other characteristics as well. In fact, this theme might be considered an example of another recurring topic in Bax's music: the 'Irish tune'. This typically (though not invariably) takes the form of a broad, lyrical diatonic melody with strong pentatonic inflections played by strings. This topic can be traced back to the opening melody of Bax's tone poem *Cathleen-ni-Hoolihan* (1903–5).<sup>157</sup> While there are further examples in Bax's output of the 'Irish tune' functioning as the main or first theme of a work or movement (often appearing after an introductory section in a ternary form),<sup>158</sup> its more natural position—taking into account its often lyrical, feminine qualities—is as a secondary theme in a work in dialogue with sonata form. Examples are to be found, among other places, in *Into The*

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<sup>155</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 37, 41.

<sup>156</sup> Thursday, 4 May 1916. British Library, MS Mus. 1651.

<sup>157</sup> *Cathleen-ni-Hoolihan* is yet another female personification of Ireland.

<sup>158</sup> See, for example, the second movements of the Second (1924–6) and Fourth (1930–1) Symphonies and *In Memoriam: In Memory of Patrick Pearse*. The theme in the central section of *The Garden of Fand* could also be considered an instance of the 'Irish tune', highlighting the fact that this topic is sometimes difficult to distinguish from the 'amorous song' topic identified by Puffett.

*Twilight* (1908), *November Woods*, and in the first movements of the First (1921–2) and Seventh (1938–9) Symphonies (occurring only briefly in the latter).<sup>159</sup> The secondary theme of *Tintagel* quite clearly belongs to this category. Its quasi-pentatonicism, in particular, identifies it as an instance of the ‘Irish tune’, not least because Bax himself described the use of the pentatonic scale as ‘peculiar to Irish folk music’.<sup>160</sup> The fact that the main theme of the orchestral *In Memoriam*, composed just a year earlier, is also a B major ‘Irish tune’ suggests some potential intertextual connection between this work and *Tintagel*, thus reinforcing the Irish, and specifically the Easter Rising, connection.

If we accept that the secondary theme is symbolic of Ireland, this has profound implications for the interpretation of the whole work. Now the tonal unity of the exposition could be interpreted as a picture of an ideal Ireland, a prelapsarian dream-world unsullied by ‘reality’. In this reading, the primary theme suggests not the ruins of Tintagel Castle but the Castle in all its glory during an earlier era, symbolic of a golden Celtic age in Ireland. The first intrusion of the chromatic music at bar 45 signals the beginning of the corruption of the ideal established in the preceding bars. The two statements of the secondary theme near the start of the development suggest a futile striving for this lost ideal, soon drowned out by the troubled chromatic music. This corruption of the ideal sets in motion the characteristically Wagnerian cyclical process described earlier, the final stage of which is the redemption, the return to the ideal. All of the music from the moment of the corruption may be considered part of a struggle to reach this moment of redemption—the *telos*—which is, in a sense, ‘the moment the entire work has been constructed to produce’.<sup>161</sup>

Relevant here is James Hepokoski’s concept of ‘teleological genesis’.<sup>162</sup> This process is apparent in works where there is ‘a decisive climax or final goal (*telos*)’, and where the

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<sup>159</sup> In the symphonies, the explicit programmatic link with Ireland is now missing but the association established in previous works is carried over. Aidan Thomson notes that the opposites in Bax’s music observed by Colin Scott-Sutherland—‘Bax, the Romantic’ and ‘Bax, the Celt’—are typical of Bax’s first and second subjects respectively’. Thomson, ‘Bax’s “Sea Symphony”’.

<sup>160</sup> Programme note for his *Concert Piece* for viola and piano (1904), quoted in Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax*, 49. The melody in *Tintagel* is not entirely pentatonic but is centred around the notes of the pentatonic scale on B. The triplet figures in the violas and bassoon that accompany it (S<sup>1.0</sup>) also, initially, use only the notes of that same scale.

<sup>161</sup> Darcy, ‘Bruckner’s Sonata Deformations’, 277.

<sup>162</sup> Hepokoski initially formulated this concept in his writings on Sibelius, but it is relevant to the work of many other composers as well. For Hepokoski’s writings on the subject, see *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, 26; ‘Temps Perdu. Revolutionary or Reactionary? James Hepokoski Delves into a Fundamental Paradox at the Heart of Charles Ives’ Musical Style’, *Musical Times*, 135 (1994), 746–51; ‘Sibelius’, in D. Kern Holoman (ed.), *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* (New York, 1997), 417–49 at 432; Hepokoski, ‘Beethoven Reception’, 454. Warren Darcy has also written about teleological genesis: see ‘Rotational Form, Teleological Genesis, and Fantasy-Projection in the Slow Movement of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony’, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 25 (2001), 49–74;

music is ‘gradually generative towards the revelation of a higher or fuller condition’.<sup>163</sup> Often this is combined with rotational structures in which ‘a motivic gesture or hint planted in an early rotation grows in later rotations and is ultimately unfurled as the *telos* in the final one’.<sup>164</sup> *Tintagel* certainly works towards a decisive climax, but its process of teleological genesis differs in significant ways from the descriptions just given. Although the statements of the secondary theme in the development might be regarded as the planting of seeds which will fully flower later in the piece, *Tintagel* does not involve ‘successively more “revelatory”’ rotations of the same motivic material.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, because in *Tintagel* the exposition has already presented ideal, fully-formed versions of both themes in the tonic key, the *telos* (the recapitulatory statement of the secondary theme) constitutes the endpoint of a process of regeneration. The secondary theme certainly emerges transformed, but it also recovers something that the work has already presented us with. Thus it might be more suitable to speak of a process of ‘teleological regeneration’.<sup>166</sup>

If the exposition presents an ideal picture of Ireland, the development suggests a nation in chaos after an imagined Fall. The ‘Sick Tristan’ motif often seems to be in competition with the other chromatic motif that dominates the development. The constant alternation between these two motifs, in addition to the development’s generally agitated atmosphere, creates a sense of conflict (hence the name given to the motif shown in Ex. 8). Moreover, this ‘Conflict’ motif often sounds threatening and sometimes even militaristic, particularly at bars 109 and 113. In his orchestral work *In Memoriam* (1916), Bax more explicitly evoked a militaristic atmosphere (presumably intended to depict the fighting on Sackville Street during Easter Week), with the use of a side-drum and ominous marching rhythms. In that work, too, the conflict is found in the music’s central section, framed by a B major ‘Irish tune’. Perhaps, then, more than just suggesting Bax’s inner, private conflict, the

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‘The Metaphysics of Annihilation: Wagner, Schopenhauer, and the Ending of the “Ring”’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, 16 (1994), 1–40 at 10; ‘Bruckner’s Sonata Deformations’, 259–77. For more recent work that deals with the concept of teleological genesis, see Andrew Davis and Howard Pollack, ‘Rotational Form in the Opening of Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 60 (2007), 373–414; Graham G. Hunt, ‘David Lewin and Valhalla Revisited: New Approaches to Motivic Corruption in Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, 29 (2007), 177–96; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, “‘Our True North’: Walton’s First Symphony, Sibelianism, and the Nationalization of Modernism in England’, *Music & Letters*, 89 (2008), 562–89; Tom Schneller, ‘Sweet Fulfillment: Allusion and Teleological Genesis in John William’s *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*’, *Musical Quarterly*, 97 (2014), 98–131; Allis, ‘Bantock and Southey’, 39–69.

<sup>163</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, 26.

<sup>164</sup> Darcy, ‘The Metaphysics of Annihilation: Wagner, Schopenhauer, and the Ending of the “Ring”’, 10.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Warren Darcy does identify, in relation to Bruckner’s works, a kind of teleological genesis in which ‘a fully formed theme is gradually transformed into something different’: the *telos*. The notion of teleological regeneration still seems to me to more effectively describe the process at work in *Tintagel*. Darcy, ‘Bruckner’s Sonata Deformations’, 261.

development of *Tintagel* could also be linked to the real-world conflict of Easter 1916 (especially given the Irish connotations of the ‘Sick Tristan’ motif). As with his *Symphonic Variations* (also composed in 1917), in which Bax depicted ‘Strife’ eventually being overcome by ‘Triumph’, so too in *Tintagel* might the development represent the strife, and perhaps even the revolutionary violence, required to achieve victory.

[INSERT EX. 8 HERE]

In any case, the struggle in the developmental space and the difficulty of recovering the ideal of the exposition proves to be so great that the struggle spills over into the start of the recapitulation. Now, though, one senses that the *telos*, the triumph, is imminent. The striving towards this goal becomes ever more urgent. The two climactic crescendos culminating with the *sforzando* chords over bars 164–8 and 182–6, in particular, suggest that the moment of regeneration is within touching distance. The second of these climaxes, a diminished seventh chord on B, described by Bax as the waves smashing against the rocks, recalls a similarly climactic moment four bars before fig. T in *The Garden of Fand*. There, too, the music, according to Bax’s programme, represents a massive wave—the one that engulfs Fand’s island and kills the mortal voyagers. For Bax, the sea symbolized death as well as sexual desire.<sup>167</sup> This link between the sea and death is evidenced not just by *Fand* but by Bax’s literary works as well. Two of his stories, *The Sisters* and *Green Magic* (1912), both involve characters drowning in the Atlantic Ocean, which is described in the first story as the ‘fatal sea’.<sup>168</sup> In the fourth stanza of Bax’s poem ‘A Dublin Ballad—1916’, he writes that the English army, sent to suppress the insurrection in Dublin, ‘swarmed in from the fatal sea’.<sup>169</sup> Following Puffett’s suggestion that the programme of *Fand* can be used to interpret Bax’s later sea music, the violent crashing wave at bar 186 of *Tintagel* might be interpreted as representing some kind of death. This is especially significant because it is this death that finally ushers in the redemptive *telos*. Just as Pearse believed there had to be a blood sacrifice—his own death—to bring about the redemption of Ireland and the revival of a heroic age, so too in *Tintagel* is the moment of regeneration achieved only after the fatal sea

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<sup>167</sup> As Adorno observed in relation to Wagner’s later works, ‘pleasure and death become one’. Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London, 2005), 4. See also Puffett, ‘In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the “Celtic Twilight”’, 206. Aidan Thomson considers Bax’s conception of the sea as a destructive force in Thomson, ‘Bax’s “Sea Symphony”’.

<sup>168</sup> Dermot O’Byrne, *The Sisters and Green Magic* (London, 1912), 48. Foreman provides a very brief summary of these stories in *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 421–2.

<sup>169</sup> Scott-Sutherland (ed.), *Ideala: Love Letters and Poems of Arnold Bax*, 249.

asserts itself most violently.<sup>170</sup> As in Wagner's *Tristan*, death and redemption coincide in the transcendental key of B major.

The recapitulation of the secondary theme not only revives the ideal of the exposition but transforms it into something new. The theme has now lost its femininity and acquired a forcefulness and strength that it did not have in the exposition; it has undergone a process of masculinization. The recapitulatory statement of the secondary theme suggests the new, heroic, masculine Ireland that Pearse hoped his sacrifice would bring about. There is clearly a parallel here with the last two lines of Bax's poem 'The East Clare Election: 1917': 'And we must drench in blood and sweat before we turn to kiss / In grianans and cashels of an Ireland built anew'.<sup>171</sup> Only after the struggle of the development and the effortful striving at the start of the recapitulation—the (masculine) blood, sweat, and potentially even a sacrificial death—can the new heroic Ireland emerge. A further analogy might be drawn with the cyclical evolution proposed by Blavatsky, described above. The exposition could represent an ancient Irish civilization at the height of its greatness which falls into decline in the development. The recapitulation then signals the beginning of a new cycle in which 'humanity reasserts itself and mounts up once more'—it regenerates—only this time when it reaches 'the height of its attainment' (at b. 190) it peaks at a higher point than the previous cycle.

We can now begin to see how two apparently conflicting statements Bax made about *Tintagel* might be reconciled. On the one hand, Bax wrote in his programme that 'the piece ends as it began', implying that the narrative of *Tintagel* is ultimately cyclical. On the other hand, Bax praised a performance of the work conducted by Dan Godfrey because of the 'wonderful sense of shape and growth' he put into the piece: 'a gradual development from the

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<sup>170</sup> Parallels can be drawn here with nationalist music from other European countries which sought to depict the revival of the ideals of a heroic past. A good example is Bedřich Smetana's cycle of six symphonic poems, *Má vlast*, composed in the 1870s. The first part of the cycle, *Vyšehrad*, depicts the eponymous ancient castle which stands on a rock above the River Vltava in Prague. The music first depicts the castle in all its former glory and subsequently its 'fall and decay'—the ruins of the castle in the present day. *Blaník*, the title of the sixth and final part of the cycle, is a mountain, in which, according to myth, the revolutionary fifteenth-century Hussite knights had gone into hiding and entered a 'profound sleep'. When their country needed them most, the Hussites would awaken from their slumber in the mountain, defeat the enemies of the Czech people, and bring about the establishment of an independent Czech nation. At the end of *Blaník*, at the apotheosis of the whole cycle, a theme from *Vyšehrad* returns, signalling the regeneration of the ancient heroic ideal embodied by the Hussites. See David Bruce Mead, 'The Symphonic Structure of Smetana's "Má vlast"' (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1994), 47–60, 157–8; Kelly St. Pierre, 'Smetana's "Vyšehrad" and Mythologies of Czechness in Scholarship', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 37 (2013), 91–112; Michael Beckerman, 'In Search of Czechness in Music', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 10 (1986), 61–73. *Vyšehrad* was performed at the same concert in which Bax's *A Connemara Revel* was premiered in April 1905, so he would have been at least vaguely familiar with the work. 'Royal Academy of Music', *Musical Times*, 46 (1905), 330.

<sup>171</sup> Scott-Sutherland (ed.), *Ideala: Love Letters and Poems of Arnold Bax*, 242.

first bar to the last'. Bax added that he did not think *Tintagel* could 'ever be better played in this respect'.<sup>172</sup> This idea of a 'gradual development' throughout the work certainly corresponds with the 'gradually generative' process of teleological genesis described by Hepokoski. But these cyclical and teleological conceptions of *Tintagel* need not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, one might suggest that the work contains a teleological trajectory—from the start of the development to the secondary theme in the recapitulation—encapsulated within a larger cyclical one, spanning the whole work and involving the revival of the exposition's ideal.

This is not the whole story, however, as what happens between the *telos* and the final few triumphant bars of B major complicates matters. The *per aspera ad astra* trajectory, having achieved its goal, breaks down at the end of the recapitulation. Bars 210–17 signal another decay, a corruption of the regenerated ideal. Some early reviews of the work observed the sense of anti-climax this engenders. Neville Cardus, for instance, wrote that 'with the orchestra losing power at the climax, the work ends, leaving one's expectations frustrated'.<sup>173</sup> The *Musical Times*'s review of the work's premiere expressed a similar sentiment: 'One felt ... that a better structural balance could have been obtained, and that a keener sense of climax would have improved this deeply-felt piece of writing'.<sup>174</sup> This apparent anti-climax might be considered in terms of what Warren Darcy refers to as the 'rebirth paradigm', according to which 'a symphonic movement passes through a series of metaphorical "deaths" and "rebirths"'.<sup>175</sup> He writes that such a 'metaphorical death' often occurs soon after the *telos* amid a 'recapitulatory crisis'.<sup>176</sup> Typically, though, there is one 'final rebirth' in the coda.<sup>177</sup> In *Tintagel* this second death creates the impression that the cycle of ideal-corruption-regeneration could, or has already begun to, repeat itself all over again (as in Darcy's pessimistic interpretation of Wagner's *Ring*). In fact, the coda presents this whole process in miniature: there is the triplet figure (S<sup>1.0</sup>) that accompanied the ideal, feminine, expositional version of the secondary theme (bb. 218–19); then there is the decay (a third death, perhaps) represented by the 'Sick Tristan' motif (bb. 220–3); and finally the striving for (bb. 224–7) and the achievement of the regeneration with the jubilant, fortissimo B major ending. Despite this final rebirth, it is still that last haunting statement of the 'Sick

<sup>172</sup> Quoted in Andrews (ed.), *Cuchulan Among the Guns*, 28.

<sup>173</sup> N[eville] C[ardus], 'Leeds Festival: Mr. Bax's "Tintagel"', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 Oct. 1922, 14.

<sup>174</sup> 'Music in the Provinces: Bournemouth', *Musical Times*, 62 (1921), 865.

<sup>175</sup> Darcy, 'Bruckner's Sonata Deformations', 262.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* 263. Darcy is writing specifically about Bruckner's symphonies here but the same applies to works of many other late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century composers.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* 264.



Tristan' motif that stands out above all else (Ex. 9). We might now return to the question of what this uncanny voice could be narrating.

Abbate notes that moments of narration are often 'charged with a sense of both distance and difference', and Matthew McDonald has pointed out that narrators themselves 'tend to be far removed from the events they present and comment on'.<sup>178</sup> It is significant, then, that Bax was in England, both at the time of the Rising and when he composed *Tintagel*, and thus at a spatial and (when he wrote the work) temporal distance from Ireland and the insurrection.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, as noted above, the music of Ex. 9 stands out in the context of the work itself. It is certainly charged with a sense of difference, and it is at a temporal distance from the agitated music of the development from which it derives. Considering also the Irish connotations of the 'Sick Tristan' motif, we might propose that this voice mourns the loss that was required to achieve the regeneration of the Irish ideal. Although Abbate's 'aural vision of music animated by multiple, decentered voices localized in several invisible bodies', is cast in opposition to the 'monologic and controlling "composer's voice"',<sup>180</sup> it is difficult to dissociate the music of Ex. 9 from Bax himself, at a distance from Ireland and mourning the death of Pearse.

The significance of these two bars might be further elucidated by their similarity to another Wagnerian leitmotif, shown in Ex. 10. This motif is associated with Brünnhilde's magic sleep at the end of *Die Walküre*, and with oblivion when it reappears near the end of *Götterdämmerung*, as Brünnhilde rides into the flames of Siegfried's funeral pyre. As in Ex. 9, Wagner's leitmotif is characterized by a sense of contraction, created by the contrary motion, and by its smooth chromatic voice-leading. Furthermore, the movement by thirds in the bass of Ex. 9 (C–E–G–B) resembles the chromatic mediant relationship between the chords appearing on the first beat of every other bar in the Wagner example (though there the thirds are descending rather than ascending). In recalling the end of the world pictured at the close of Wagner's *Ring* cycle, and the moment when Wotan kisses Brünnhilde goodbye at the end of *Die Walküre*, perhaps Bax was saying a final farewell to his 'Celtic wonderland' that had gone up in flames.

[INSERT EXX. 9 AND 10 HERE]

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<sup>178</sup> Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, xii; Matthew McDonald, 'Silent Narration? Elements of Narrative in Ives's *The Unanswered Question*', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 27 (2004), 263–86 at 280.

<sup>179</sup> Bax noted that the work was composed 'altogether in London'. Andrews (ed.), *Cuchulan Among the Guns*, 62.

<sup>180</sup> Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 13.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Easter Rising brought a violent, bloody conflict into Bax's dream-world; it meant a devastating collision of this dream-world and reality. Bax wrote that 'the catastrophe of 1914 ... bundled away dreams such as those in which I had hitherto indulged', but it was the events of 1916 that quite literally saw his Celtic wonderland burned to the ground.<sup>181</sup> The new, masculine Ireland came (or would come) at a price: the death of the dreamy mythological Ireland.<sup>182</sup> The first line of Bax's poem 'The East Clare Election: 1917' reflects this transition from the old to the new Ireland: 'We've thrown our harps down tumbling gulphs and taken up our swords'.<sup>183</sup> As Yeats put it in his own poetic response to the Rising ('Easter, 1916'), all had 'changed, changed utterly' after the insurrection and the execution of the rebels. However, whereas Yeats was ambivalent about Ireland's future after Easter 1916—as expressed in the well-known oxymoronic refrain of his poem, 'A terrible beauty is born'—Bax was more optimistic, naive perhaps, in implying in his poetry that the revolutionary violence of 1916 would ultimately lead to a brighter future.<sup>184</sup>

Aidan Thomson suggests that Bax's rejection of Celtic mythology, or 'overt Celticism', for nature as a compositional stimulus was part of a process of masculinizing the 'Celtic Other', a process which paralleled earlier developments in Irish literature.<sup>185</sup> But the trigger for Bax's 'retreat' to a more masculine conception of Celticism was Pearse's real-life, modern-day heroism. The dawning of a new era in Ireland's history required from Bax a more masculine kind of music to match it. In fact, the Easter Rising marked the beginning of Bax's disengagement with the work of the Irish literary revival. He certainly produced far fewer prose works after this point, writing to Cohen in the month after the Rising that although he was 'still writing verse', it was 'very hard—harder than it used to be'.<sup>186</sup>

As Thomson explains, Bax's rejection, after the First World War, of the 'overt Celticism' of his earlier tone poems 'involved rejecting not only the mythology but the values

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<sup>181</sup> Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 167.

<sup>182</sup> Fabian Huss observes that 'Bax's romantic, escapist vision of Ireland was no longer possible' after the Rising. Huss, 'The "Irish Music" of Arnold Bax and E. J. Moeran', 73.

<sup>183</sup> Scott-Sutherland (ed.), *Ideala: Love Letters and Poems of Arnold Bax*, 242.

<sup>184</sup> On 8 May 1916 Yeats wrote that 'one knows nothing of the future except that it must be very unlike the past'. Quoted in McGarry, *The Rising, Ireland: Easter 1916*, 281. It is important to note that Bax's political poetry, like *Tintagel*, was completed before the Irish War of Independence (1919–21) and the Irish Civil War (1922–3), events that may have tempered his earlier optimism.

<sup>185</sup> Thomson, 'Bax and the "Celtic North"', 73. Thomson cites Lady Gregory's fictional account of the heroic *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902) as an example of an earlier attempt to masculinize the 'Celtic Other'.

<sup>186</sup> Tuesday, 16 May 1916. British Library, MS Mus. 1651.

associated with it'. This paved the way for the 'more austere, consciously abstract symphonies' that Bax composed during the next two decades.<sup>187</sup> The retreat from Celtic mythology, then, had to go hand in hand with a rejection of the influences of Wagnerism and Theosophy as well, as these movements represented the same feminine, sentimental, dreamy, anti-materialist values. Wagner in particular came to be associated with the feminine and an unhealthy decadence which became increasingly unfashionable after the 1890s.<sup>188</sup> Bax's fascination with dreams and with a world beyond the veil (themes common to both Wagner and Theosophy) were also incompatible with a new Ireland trying to assert itself as a powerful independent nation fully engaged with reality.

*Tintagel*, with its elements of sickly, decadent Wagnerian chromaticism, and its connections with Arthurian mythology, might, on the face of it, seem to belong to the group of Bax's earlier 'feminine' works. But unlike most of Bax's previous tone poems, 'nature predominates over mythology' in *Tintagel*, as one critic put it in the 1930s.<sup>189</sup> This aligns it with Bax's later works, associated with the harsh landscapes and seascapes of a more general 'Celtic North'.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, the transformation of the work's 'Irish' secondary theme—from feminine and sentimental in the exposition, to masculine and heroic in the recapitulation—can be interpreted as an acting out of this aesthetic shift, of his masculinization of the 'Celtic Other', within the work itself. *Tintagel* can be viewed as a stormy sea picture or a memory of some passionate rendezvous, but it can also be interpreted as a response to the tumultuous events of 1916. The work offers a snapshot of this turning point in Bax's life and development as a composer; it signals the end of his most fervent phase of fascination with Celtic mythology and a feminine Ireland, but it also promises a new beginning, looking forward, like his contemporaneous poetry, to 'an Ireland built anew'.

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<sup>187</sup> Thomson, 'Bax and the "Celtic North"', 73.

<sup>188</sup> This negative view of Wagner's femininity and decadence was influenced and exemplified by Nietzsche's attack on Wagner in *The Case of Wagner* (1888). Emma Sutton explains that 'Nietzsche align[ed] Wagner's work with the over-affective, the sentimental, and the emotional, the qualities purportedly most attractive to female aesthetes'. Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s*, 95–6. See also Byron Adams, 'Elgar's Later Oratorios: Roman Catholicism, Decadence and the Wagnerian Dialectic of Shame and Grace', in Daniel Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge, 2004), 81–105.

<sup>189</sup> R. W. S. Mendl, 'The Art of the Symphonic Poem', *Musical Quarterly*, 18 (1932), 443–62 at 460.

<sup>190</sup> Bax explained that the Celtic North comprised 'Northern Ireland [not the country], Northern Scotland, [and] Northern Europe'. Quoted in Thomson, 'Bax and the "Celtic North"', 69.