
East Meets West in Peggy Glanville-Hicks's *The Transposed Heads* *

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The Australian composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks (1912–1990) spent most of her life overseas, most notably the periods of study in London (with Vaughan Williams) and Paris (with Nadia Boulanger), and seventeen years as a high-profile figure in the vibrant post-World War II musical life of New York. She wrote over sixty works, including six operas, eight ballets and many vocal and instrumental works. Her abhorrence of Schoenberg's twelve-tone method of composition, her rejection of neoclassicism and electronic music, and her search for non-western musics as a source of renewal in twentieth-century Western art music, framed the direction of her later compositions. Glanville-Hicks's new musical direction began to emerge during the mid-to-late 1940s, through the influence of a group of American composers—most notably Colin McPhee, Lou Harrison, Paul Bowles, Alan Hovhaness and Carlos Surinach—who were using non-Western musics as their inspiration. By the early 1950s, she had formulated a new approach to composition, one that drew directly upon the musics of non-Western cultures and placed a heightened emphasis on melody and rhythm, as well as a reduced focus on harmony. This will be referred to in this article as the 'melody-rhythm concept.'

Glanville-Hicks first applied her new concept in two short, experimental pieces: the Sonata for Piano and Percussion (1951) and the song cycle *Letters from Morocco* (1952). Her first substantial application of the new approach came in *The Transposed Heads* (1953), the first of five operas that she wrote during the 1950s and '60s. Whereas the Sonata for Piano and Percussion had been based on music from the Watusi tribe in Africa and *Letters from Morocco* had used melodies from North Africa, *The Transposed Heads* took the music of India as its starting point. Glanville-Hicks commented many times on her employment of Indian musical sources, asserting that her use of this material neither infringed upon its essential nature, nor required her to amend her compositional style:

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Many of the tunes throughout the work are taken freely and in some cases directly from Hindu folk sources; it required no great amendment of my own writing method to plan the structure of the work so as to include Indian materials, for over a period of years I have gradually shed the harmonic dictatorship peculiar to modernists, and have evolved a melody-rhythm structure that comes very close to the musical patterns of the antique world. It was possible therefore—with a certain selectivity in regard to the scales used—to incorporate Indian folk themes without doing any violence to their unique character, or without altering my own way of writing.¹

She also emphasised the difference between ‘arrangement’ and ‘synthesis’ of Oriental musical ingredients: ‘the one superficial, the other an organic process.’²

The difference I’m trying to make clear is that one is a completely creative process and its starting point a special scale and rhythm type; the other is simply a borrowing, an ‘arrangement’ where the alien material is pushed into a pre-conceived framework, a formula structurally and aesthetically unsuited to contain it.³

Taking Glanville-Hicks’s commentaries as a starting point, this article will investigate how, and to what extent, East meets West in *The Transposed Heads*. Manifestations of both Indian and Western musical practices will be identified, and the article proceeds to discuss two key issues that emerge from the analysis: the extent to which Glanville-Hicks succeeded in synthesising the two musical systems; and whether Indian music can be accommodated within a Western musical framework without infringing upon its intrinsic meaning. The article concludes by exploring the cultural assumptions that underpinned Glanville-Hicks’s appropriation of Indian music, placing her approach in the context of two hundred years of similar endeavours in Western music and drawing upon Edward Said’s definitive theory of Orientalism.

Background to *The Transposed Heads*

An opera in six scenes,⁴ with a playing time of around seventy-five minutes, *The Transposed Heads* was commissioned by the Louisville (Kentucky) Philharmonic Society and premiered in Louisville in 1954.⁵ India loomed large as the backdrop to the opera, with not only the music but also the libretto drawn from original Indian sources. Glanville-Hicks herself crafted the libretto from *Die Vertauschten Köpfe*, a novella by Thomas Mann that was, as indicated in the

¹ Peggy Glanville-Hicks, liner notes for *The Transposed Heads*, Columbia Records 545-6, 1955.

² Peggy Glanville-Hicks, ‘A Hindu Theme,’ *New York Times*, 9 February 1958, sec. 2, 7.

³ Peggy Glanville-Hicks, letter to Rolf Lieberman, 25 August [no year] (Peggy Glanville-Hicks Collection, State Library of New South Wales). The year can, in fact, be deduced to be 1956 because the letter was sent from Palma de Mallorca; it was here that Glanville-Hicks spent the summer of 1956 working on the *Nausicaa* libretto with Robert Graves and Alistair Reid.

⁴ The full score and the piano reduction give different indications as to whether this is a two- or a three-act opera. The full score annotates the individual scenes within three acts (e.g. Scene 1 Act 2; Scene 2 Act 3: only Scene 2 in Act 1 is not followed by ‘Act 1’). However, a direction is given at the beginning of the short score (presumably by Glanville-Hicks) that the work can be played either continuously or with an intermission after Scene 3, the latter implying a two-act opera. This scheme makes dramatic sense.

⁵ The opera ran subsequently for a brief season in New York in 1958. It has been performed in Australia on three occasions: in 1970 as a concert production at the University of New South Wales; three stage performances were given at the Adelaide Festival in 1986; and there was a stage production in Melbourne in 1997. Two recordings of the work have been made, the first in the United States (Columbia Records 545-6, 1955), the second by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in Perth (ABC Classics 434 139-2, 1992).

title, 'a legend of India.' Writing in 1958, before the New York premiere of the work, Glanville-Hicks described her discovery of the novella as 'almost celestial:'

Not only did it meet the structural, theatrical and literary needs, but it was a Hindu legend offering an opportunity to use actual Indian themes of folk and classic origin as point of departure for the music.⁶

The story is, in Glanville-Hicks's words from her liner note to the 1955 Columbia recording, 'a miraculous blend of humour, realistic drama and metaphysical discourse.' For the realist, she wrote, 'the story goes something like this:'

A young Brahmin, Shridaman, and his low-caste friend Nanda, while resting in a forest glade are inadvertently the witnesses of the ritual bathing of a lovely young maiden who comes to the river bank. Shridaman, the ascetic, without realizing it becomes an immediate victim of her voluptuousness.

Meeting him some days later, Nanda finds his friend dying from love and despair. He laughs at him, and promises to woo and win the lovely Sita on his friend's behalf, according to Hindu custom.

The wedding scene is wholly joyful, but tragedy comes swiftly thereafter. The three, journeying through a forest come upon an immense ruined Temple of Kali, and Shridaman leaves Sita and Nanda together while he enters to say a prayer. It is immediately apparent that there is an unspoken love blossoming between the wife and the friend.

Shridaman, inside the Temple, is overcome with awe and religious fervour as he contemplates the gigantic Kali, and momentarily hypnotized by her power, offers himself as sacrifice, cutting off his own head with a sword.⁷ Nanda following to find his friend, sees the disaster, blames himself and his secret love for Sita as the cause and follows suit, beheading himself beside his friend. Next comes Sita, to discover the double tragedy, and she also blaming herself for her unfaithfulness in mind to her husband prepares to hang herself in a trailing vine when Kali's immense voice is heard. The Goddess, after chiding Sita for her stupidity instructs her to place the heads back on, promising that all will be again as it was. Sita in fear and trembling performs the bloody task, but in her flurry she makes the Freudian slip of all time and places the husband's head upon the lover's body, and vice versa. They rise up irrevocably transposed, and who is now to say which is the legal husband, which the friend?

A Guru is consulted who proclaims the head as the rightful husband, so the Nanda head with the husband body retire to a hermitage. Time passes, and Sita begins to pine for the parts she lacks. Presently she can stand it no longer and goes in search of Nanda. Shridaman has followed her, and the three, united again in the impossible triangle, decide there is no solution but to "merge their separate essences in the universal whole" by jumping into the flames. Accordingly a funeral pyre is built; but it is not permitted that a wife commit suttee until she is a widow, so Nanda and Shridaman fight a duel,

⁶ Peggy Glanville-Hicks, 'A Hindu Theme,' sec. 2, 7.

⁷ The libretto indicates, in Scene 4, that Shridaman's reasons for killing himself are only partly to do with making a sacrifice to the Goddess, and are more to do with his sexually dysfunctional relationship with Sita.

each piercing the other to the heart in a single moment, and as they fall upon the fire, Sita steps in beside them and all are consumed.

Whilst the libretto can be linked unequivocally to India, the source and degree of Glanville-Hicks's knowledge of Indian music is less easily defined. She first became acquainted with this music when the ship that took her to London in 1932 stopped off at Bombay.⁸ According to James Murdoch's comprehensive biography of Glanville-Hicks, an 'extraordinary young man' called Narayana Menon joined the ship in Bombay, and he and Glanville-Hicks went on to become life-long friends and colleagues.⁹ In Murdoch's account, Menon 'informed her about the theory and structure of Indian classical music and eventually guided her various visits to India itself.'¹⁰ Murdoch gives no indication, however, of when these visits occurred, and there is little evidence in the various Glanville-Hicks archives, or her diaries, that she had sustained contact with Indian music prior to early 1962 when a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation enabled her to visit India and to study its music. She took the opportunity at that time to study 'the basis of raga and tala,' but this was many years after the composition of *The Transposed Heads*.¹¹ The extent and exact nature of Indian musical sources in this opera, then, remain unclear, although both Glanville-Hicks's commentaries and the evidence in the score indicate that Indian music was a significant ingredient in the opera.

Use of Indian Musical Sources

Glanville-Hicks's commentaries on the opera occasionally identify specific melodies as being of Indian origin. One example is the two-bar melody with which the opera begins.¹² The treatment of this melody is, however, clearly Western. Set in E-flat major, the melody is supported by functional harmony (I-vi-IV-V-I) over a tonic pedal (see Example 1).¹³ Whilst the major-scale pitch collection corresponds to the Indian *Bilaval that* (or scale), the underpinning of functional harmony ensures that a major scale is the clear implication. Glanville-Hicks's harmonisation of this theme, incongruous in the context of its proclaimed Indian origin, was at the same time justified and denied by her: 'The way they played the instruments implied harmonic progression, though they don't of course use harmony and nor do I.'¹⁴ In the same commentary,

⁸ Peggy Glanville-Hicks, *PG-H: A Modern Odyssey*, prod. and dir. John Tristram and I. James Wilson, 57 min., Juniper Films, 1984, videocassette.

⁹ James Murdoch, *Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Transposed Life* (New York: Pendragon Press, 2002) 13.

¹⁰ Murdoch, *Peggy Glanville-Hicks*, 13.

¹¹ Narayana Menon, letter to Glanville-Hicks, 2 January 1962 (Peggy Glanville-Hicks Collection, Mitchell Library). He wrote, in response to a request from her, that he would 'think of a good teacher who could give some time for learning the basis of raga and tala. Perhaps our old friend Geeta [probably Sarabhai] who is in Bombay will be excellent.' The Mitchell Library collection also contains firm evidence of her study of Indian music in the form of handwritten notes by Glanville-Hicks on the qualities of a raga, corresponding versions of various Indian modes and the 'hyper' versions of the Western ecclesiastical modes, with the semitones marked in each, and a summary from Fox Strangway's 1914 book of the corresponding Greek, ecclesiastical and Carnatic (South Indian) modes and Hindustani (North Indian) *thats* (see MSS 6394/14). Unfortunately, these workings are undated, and it cannot be ascertained whether Glanville-Hicks actually undertook this study before or after composition of *The Transposed Heads*.

¹² Peggy Glanville-Hicks, *Composer Profile: Peggy Glanville-Hicks*, interviewed by Charles Southwood, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, no date, audio tape.

¹³ All musical examples with the exception of Example 8 are taken from Peggy Glanville Hicks, *The Transposed Heads* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1958).

¹⁴ Glanville-Hicks, *Composer Profile*.

Example 1. *The Transposed Heads*, Overture, bb. 1–6

♩ = 80

Strings
Trumpet

Woodwinds

Ww.

f

Suspended Cymbal

ff

Tamtam

Timpani

Bassoon

♯ Stgs.

Gong III

Gong II

A

she acknowledged the use of ‘the diatonic clichés of harmony in the portrayal of Shridaman,’ the character with whom this theme comes to be associated throughout the opera.

This melody is almost invariably harmonised in its many subsequent appearances in the opera. Its treatment at the beginning of Scene 1, however, where it is underpinned by a I/V drone, is more analogous to Indian music where I-V or (less commonly) I-IV drones sound throughout the performance and function as a tonal reference point for the melodic line (see Example 2). Any Indian connotation is soon eroded by the addition of the tam-tam (bar 3) and gong (bar 14), instruments that are quite foreign to Indian music and which evoke a general Oriental exoticism rather than a specifically Indian atmosphere. The drone, moreover, becomes a pedal in the second phrase, with voice leading in the horn and upper strings creating two

Example 2. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 1, bb. 1–6

♩ = 80

Hn.

Fl.

mp

mp

Stgs.

Tamt.

1

bars of functional harmony (see Example 3), a sort of slippage between—or arguably synthesis of—the Indian and Western musical systems.

Example 3. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 1, Fig. 4+4 to Fig. 6+1

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system features a vocal line (Soprano) and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a circled measure 5. The lyrics are: "It is ex - tr'or - di - nar - i - ly peace - - - ful. / Es ist so au - sser - or - dent - lich frie - - - de - voll." The piano accompaniment includes a Gong III. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, with dynamics *mp* and *mf*. The lyrics are: "As / Es". The third system features a vocal line and piano accompaniment, with a circled measure 6. The lyrics are: "though - - - - - we - - - - - were moved - - - - - from / ist - - - - - ganz - - - - - als wä - - - - - re".

Such slippage between the two musical systems is also evident in the fast section of the Overture, which begins with a nine-bar theme that has a free, improvisatory feel. In this it is, perhaps, more identifiably Indian—or less identifiably Western—than the opening theme of the opera (see Example 4). Based on a tonal centre of G, this theme is in mixolydian mode (corresponding in Indian musical theory to *Khamaj that*) and is set in the transparent, layered texture that is to recur throughout the opera. The three textural layers could be seen to correspond to the three components of Indian music: melody, rhythm (in this case a syncopated, rhythmic ostinato scored for tom tom), and drone (here a bass line comprising the ostinato-like repetition of G and D). Again, however, there is a blurring of Western and Indian musical practices. On the one hand the Western notion of thematic development is eschewed, and the melodic material is fragmented and set in kaleidoscopically-shifting patterns that bear some resemblance to the melodic improvisations of Indian music (see Example 5). At the same time, essential Indian elements are missing, such as the complex improvisational interplay between melody (*raga*) and rhythm (*tala*), and of course the microtonal inflections of pitch that are intrinsic to Indian music.

Example 4. *The Transposed Heads, Overture, Fig. B+3 to Fig. D+1*

♩ = 112

(B) + 3 Clarinet Stgs.

Tom-tom

+ Timp., Tbn.

(C)

(D)

The mix of Western and Indian musical practices is also evident in the bass line, which is dominated by the ostinato-like repetition of G and D. These notes could be seen as repeated tonic and dominant (a Western interpretation) or as an articulated I-V drone (an Indian interpretation). In reality, drone and harmony weave seamlessly in and out of each other. In the first six bars, for example, G and D function predominantly as an articulated drone; in the seventh and eighth bars, however, the bass line changes to subdominant harmony before resolving again onto tonic and dominant in the ninth bar via the IV-I-V-I cadential formula (refer to Example 4). That there are elements of both East and West in this passage cannot be denied. Similar passages occur throughout the opera and are, I believe, Glanville-Hicks's most successful fusion of the two musical systems.

Example 5. *The Transposed Heads, Overture, Fig. E+3 to Fig. F+1*

♩ = 112

Clarinet Stgs.

(F)

mf

Tom-tom

Tam-tam + Timp., Tbn.

Timp. (small)

The most direct reference to Indian music occurs in the Wedding Dance in Scene 3, which begins with the annotation 'Introduction to Dance (the wind instruments state the raga, or scale, for the dance).' To some extent, this is what happens in the opening ten bars. To the accompaniment of a I-V drone in the lower strings and harp, various melodic fragments are set out in the clarinet as the foundation for what is to come (see Example 6).

Example 6. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 3, Fig. 169 to Fig. 175+1

Introduction and Dance

Einleitung und Tanz

A flute player and a tabla player (tabla = a set of two small drums) could be seated on stage as though part of the village life.

Ein Flötenspieler und ein Tablaspieler (Tabla eine Kombination von zwei kleinen Tom-toms) mögen auf der Bühne Platz nehmen, wie zur Dorfbewohnerung gehören.

Freely
169

Cl. *mf* Gong III Vc., B., Hp. Tamt. *mp* Triang. *p* Tom-t. Susp. Cym. Triang. **Dance (Tanz)** *f* Vc., B. + Timp. Hl., Cl., Xyl. Bn., Vc., B., Timp. Ww. *mf* + Vlns. *mf* Hn. etc. (Low Stgs.)

(The flute player tunes up and introduces a tonal sequence, and the drummer sets the rhythmic pattern, for the dance to follow.)
(Der Flötenspieler präliedert, um die Tonreihe des folgenden Tanzes anzugeben, während der Tom-tomspieler das rhythmische Grundmetrio schlägt.)

170

171

172

173

174

175

In none of the Glanville-Hicks commentaries is there any indication that these melodic fragments, or the theme that follows, are taken directly from Indian musical sources. Nonetheless, these bars bear some resemblance to the *alap* of Indian music ('a kind of improvised prelude in free time in which the melodic characteristics of the rag being performed are established and developed'),¹⁵ although Glanville-Hicks herself did not use this term. Indeed her confusion of 'raga' with 'alap' and her equation of 'raga' with 'scale' suggest that her knowledge of Indian music was somewhat sketchy. Her *alap*, too, is very short, in comparison to the *alap* in Indian music, which is considerably longer and usually contains several sections; and the scoring includes instruments that are quite foreign to Indian music—gong, tam tam, triangle and suspended cymbal. Notwithstanding this, the structure of Indian music is further invoked with the annotation 'The drummers set the tala, or rhythm, for the dance' in the eleventh bar (see also Example 6). This simple, one-bar rhythmic pattern, however, cannot be equated with the more complex tala designs of Indian music, and the rhythmic structure is closely aligned to Western music, with rhythmic ostinati organised into uniform subdivisions that are regulated by the barline.

A series of short sections follow the statement of raga and tala, exploring in a fairly superficial way the melodic fragments set out in the opening ten bars. The first section is a case in point. Here the dance theme is stated, corresponding approximately to the composed piece in a performance of Indian music (see bar 15 of Example 6). There are clear correlations between this melodic material and the melodic fragments set out in the opening bars. The first bar, for example, is a direct replica of the first bar of the *alap*; and the rising semiquaver figure in the third bar derives from a similar figure in bar 2 of the *alap*. There is thematic derivation here, but not thematic extemporisation. The melodic variations are, moreover, executed with minimal ornamentation, although *tans* or melodic ornaments are an integral aspect of Indian improvisation. One further point of note in these bars is the I-V articulated drone that underpins the theme, redolent of the ambiguous I-V drone / articulated bass line previously noted in the fast section of the Overture. The drone merges into harmony in the second section (bar 26 of Example 6), becoming, in bar 30, I-vi harmony. Again here there is slippage between—or perhaps synthesis of—the Indian and Western musical systems.

One final passage of particular note is the orchestral introduction to Scene 5. The setting is the guru's ashram, high in the Himalayas. The instrumentation again locates this music in a sort of exotic no-man's land with vibraphone, marimba, xylophone, gongs and tam tam suggestive of the Indonesian gamelan (see Example 7). The melodic material, however, appears to be of Indian origin, and it would appear that this theme is, as claimed by Suzanne Sheriff, derived from the raga *Sorath*.¹⁶ There is a clear resemblance between the intervallic patterning of this raga and Glanville-Hicks's melody, with the characteristic alternating seconds and thirds in the ascending form of the raga (see Example 8), becoming the intervallic fingerprint in both ascending and descending movement in Glanville-Hicks's melody. Not all of the characteristics of raga *Sorath*, however, are complied with. The raga excludes the third and sixth scale degrees only in ascent, where Glanville-Hicks excludes them in both ascent and

¹⁵ Nazir Jairazbhoy, *The Rags of North Indian Music: Their Structure and Evolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971) 28.

¹⁶ Suzanne Sheriff, *Three Operas of Peggy Glanville-Hicks*, BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1989, 52.

Western Musical Elements

Whilst the preceding analysis has revealed some incursion of Indian music, Western musical practices prevail through most of the opera. The use of harmony is perhaps the most significant of these. Glanville-Hicks claimed that she only occasionally used ‘the diatonic clichés of harmony,’ this being in the portrayal of Shridaman, whom she described during her interview with Charles Southwood as ‘a very pompous British raj type of Hindu.’¹⁸ Harmony, both functional and modal, both explicit and implicit, is, however, used extensively throughout the opera. One of the most notable examples is the Shridaman/Sita love duet in the third scene (see Example 9), a theme that had appeared in two of Glanville-Hicks’s earlier works—in

Example 9. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 3, Fig. 185+1 to Fig. 186+4

The musical score for Example 9 is presented in three systems. The first system (Fig. 185+1) features Sita (S.) and Shridaman (Shr.) vocal lines. Shridaman's lyrics are: "I have re - ceived her. / Ich ha - be sie er - hal - ten." Sita's lyrics are: "Shrid - a - man! / Schri - da - man!". The piano accompaniment includes Gongs III and Tamt. The second system (Fig. 186+1) continues the vocal lines. Shridaman's lyrics are: "I have re - ceived him. / Ich ha - be ihn er - hal - ten." Sita's lyrics are: "Si - ta my / Si - ta ist". The piano accompaniment includes Gongs II, Vlns., Cl., and Tamt. The third system (Fig. 186+4) features a duet. Sita's lyrics are: "Ah, my Shrid - a - man! I am the Earth and / Ah, mein Schri - da - man! Ich bin die Er - de." Shridaman's lyrics are: "I am the mel - o - dy, the / Ich bin die Me - lo - die, die". The piano accompaniment includes (Cl.), Gong II, Gongs II, III, and Tamt. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (mf, ff), articulation (accents), and performance instructions (Tutti).

¹⁸ Glanville-Hicks, *Composer Profile*.

'Ansermet' in *Thomsoniana* (1949) and then in the slow movement of the *Sinfonia da Pacifica* (1952). This theme, set here in E Aeolian, is supported by full, rich modal harmony and the duet concludes with a plagal cadence to the tonic major chord (E major), Glanville-Hicks using the clichéd tierce de picardie to symbolise happiness. The embellishment of the theme with florid arabesques in the flute and clarinet might appear to suggest an Indian influence, but this is, in reality, more evocative of a general non-Western flavour.

Glanville-Hicks's harmonic writing stems directly from the English pastoral style of her early works,¹⁹ an influence that characterises her musical language not only in *The Transposed Heads* but also in the very late works. Whilst this is not the harmony of large-scale tonal design, it is, in large sections of the opera, the structural base, the element that drives the music. This influence is also evident in Nanda's unaccompanied, folk-like song in the second scene (see Example 10), the ensuing harmonisation of which is very much in the style of a Vaughan Williams arrangement of an English folk song with mediant relationships dominating the harmonic movement and the harmony flavoured with added notes (seventh chords) and accented passing notes (see Example 11).

A further Western influence is the neoclassicism that had underpinned the works of Glanville-Hicks's middle period a decade earlier in such pieces as the *Five Songs* (1944) and the *Concertino da Camera* (1946).²⁰ Neoclassicism is nowhere more evident than in Scene 4, where the beheadings in the dramatic action are accompanied by music that is overtly Stravinskian, structured in juxtaposed blocks and characterised by tonal and textural layering.

Example 10. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 2, Fig. 137+2 to Fig. 137+16

Nanda's Song (unaccompanied, except for his own hand-clapping)

Nandas Lied (nur von seinem eigenen, rhythmischen Händeklatschen begleitet)

$\bullet = 108$

The elev-er man, the elev-er man, How wise-ly did he rea-son! But
Der wei-se Mann, der wei-se Mann, Wie wür-dig war sein Sin-nen! Nun

now, a-lack, his wits are gone, His wis-dom's out of sea-son! The glanc-es of a
ist's um sei-nen Witz ge-tan, Er-leuch-tung floh von hin-nen. Ach, ei-nes Mäd-g-leins

maid-en's eye... have turned his head to jel-ly, A mon-key tum-bled from a tree could-n't
Au-gen-spiel... Tät ihm den Kopf ver-dre-hen. Ein Af-fe, der vom Bau-me fiel, Kann...

¹⁹ The English pastoral style is defined as the early twentieth-century English style as exemplified in the work of Vaughan Williams. For an account of Glanville-Hicks's English pastoral works see Victoria Rogers, *The Musical Language of Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Critical Study of her Compositional Style with Special Reference to the Melody-Rhythm Concept of her Later Works*, PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, 2000, 38–68. See also Victoria Rogers, 'Rethinking Peggy Glanville-Hicks,' *Musicalogica Australia* 26 (2003): 65–103.

²⁰ For an account of Glanville-Hicks's neoclassical works see Rogers, *Musical Language*, 69–100, and Rogers, 'Rethinking Peggy Glanville-Hicks.'

Example 11. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 2, Fig. 139 to Fig. 140+3

(a piacere)

♩ = 108

139 N. The little witch stood there too long in your sight,
N. Die kleine Hexe stand zu lange im Pfad deiner blicke.

Fl. (Cl. & Bassa)

Ob., Bn., Hp.

140 N. Kama, the god, with the flowery arrow has pierced you.
N. da hat dich Kama, der Gott, mit dem Blumenpfeile

Such treatment is evident at the beginning of Shridaman's long monologue that ends in his beheading. Here, the descending semitone motif that underpins this scene (the 'beheading motif')²¹ becomes a syncopated ostinato pattern, which, through intervallic inversion in the bass instruments, produces continuous, dissonant clashes between the upper and lower parts (see Example 12).

Above this dissonant web and continuing throughout this section is Shridaman's melodic material, a sort of free improvisation that is tonally, as well as texturally, distinct, set in a collection that corresponds to the Indian *Bhairav that* (C–D \flat –E–F–G–A \flat –B–C,²² with occasional B-flats), a non-Western incursion in what is otherwise a very Western passage. The ensuing permutation of the theme—or juxtaposed block of musical material—is delineated by changes in register and orchestration and a shift to a pattern of continuous quavers (see bars 6 to 12 of Example 12). A third block follows (bars 13 to 17), delineated this time by a change of tonal centre and a new pattern in the orchestra: syncopated quaver seventh chords, some based on augmented triads. The layering is again both textural and tonal with the quaver chords descending by step from A-flat to F, while the texturally independent voice is based in a tonal centre of G.

The legacy of Stravinsky (and specifically the *Rite of Spring*) is again evident in the passage that follows Nanda's discovery of Shridaman's decapitated body (see Example 13). As in Stravinsky's 'Danse des Adolescentes' from *Rite of Spring*, Glanville-Hicks uses one syncopated, repeated chord which drives the music relentlessly forward (with the addition, in Glanville-Hicks's score, of the vocal line). Whilst the pitch collection is different from Stravinsky's (here superimposed chords on D-flat and F) and the accents differently located, the effect of these bars is very similar to that achieved by Stravinsky.

²¹ This motif bears a close resemblance to the opening of Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony, and in all likelihood was taken from it. For a full discussion see Rogers, *Musical Language*, 158–60.

²² This pitch collection also corresponds to the Greek chromatic folk mode, which Glanville-Hicks was to use extensively in her next major opera, *Nausicaa*.

Example 12. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 4, Fig. 198+3 to Fig. 201+4

Agitato
♩ = 152

Shr. (199)

Be - - - gin - ning - less! That wast be - fore all cre - at - - ed!
An - fangs - lo - se! Die schon vor al - - len Ent - stan - de - nen

Vlins, Vla.
+ Mar. Bn., Vc., B.
(Timp.)

Shr. (200)

war! Moth - er with - out man
Mut - ter oh ne Mann!

Gong III
ff f fp

Tamt.

Shr. (201)

whose gar - ment none lift - eth! Lust - - - ful
Jung - frau - lich Un - - - be - rühr - te! Lust - - - voll

poco a poco cresc.

Stgs., Bn.
Hrn., Tbn.

Shr.

and hor - ror - ful, em - brac - ing all! Suck - ing back in -
und schre - ckens - voll All - - - um - fan - gen - de! Die du wie - der

Gongs I II III
Tamt.

The melodic writing in large parts of the opera also links Glanville-Hicks's musical thinking firmly with western compositional practice and the anguished outburst at the beginning of Scene 2 is a case in point. Where the earlier themes moved predominantly by step, here the melodic material incorporates progressively wider leaps, culminating in octave displacement at the point of greatest emotional anguish (see Example 14). This device—the use of melodic leaps to express heightened emotion—is one that Glanville-Hicks claimed to have derived from

Example 13. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 4, Fig. 228+1 to Fig. 229

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a vocal line (N.) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in bass clef, 4/4 time, and contains the lyrics: "Sev - cred the fine head from the fine bod - y! Say: am I in - shie - den das fei - ne Haupt vom fei - nen Lei - be! Sag: bin et - wa". The piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time, and features a steady bass line with chords in the right hand. The second system also consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line contains the lyrics: "deed guilt - y of thy death by my ver - y be - ing ich schul - dig an dei - ner Tat durch mein blo - sses Da - sein". The piano accompaniment continues with similar harmonic patterns. A circled number "229" is placed above the vocal line of the second system.

twelve-tone music,²³ but it is in fact something of a cliché in Western art music, and Glanville-Hicks was drawing on a well-established tonal tradition. The harmony that underpins the melodic material in this passage is also notable: again the use of minimal harmonic resources with oscillation between just three chords, I, IV and VI, and the use of a plagal cadence to conclude the passage. The harmony is again spiced with added notes and accented passing notes, nowhere more effectively than the accented passing note that is used at the climax, approached by the leap of a minor tenth (bars 7 and 8 of Example 14).

It remains finally to comment on the tonal usage, rhythmic process, and form and structure. These aspects of the opera are also very much based in Western musical practice. As far back as the *Four Early Songs* (written by 1934) and the *Choral Suite* (1937), Glanville-Hicks's writing had been characterised by the juxtaposition (and superimposition) of modes, diatonic scales and other pitch collections, as well as by frequent shifts of tonal centre, the latter often used to articulate structure. This tonal usage carries through to *The Transposed Heads* and stands in marked contrast to the tonal patterning in Indian music, where a given pitch collection (albeit with microtonal inflections of pitch and different ascending and descending forms) underpins an entire piece/performance. The rhythmic usage, too, is closely aligned with Western musical practice, the metrical divisions by the bar contrasting markedly with the rhythmic cycles that are interwoven with the melodic patterns in Indian music. Whilst there is some evocation of Indian music through the scoring for tom tom, an instrument that closely resembles the Indian *tabla* in sound, rhythm is on the whole undeniably western in essence. In form and

²³ Peggy Glanville-Hicks, 'At the Source,' *Opera News* 26 (16 December 1961): 11. Glanville-Hicks referred to this as 'fracturing the elementary pattern of octave span' in a commentary that relates specifically to her later opera *Nausicaa*. The device is used equally, however, in *The Transposed Heads*.

Example 14. *The Transposed Heads*, Scene 2, Fig. 119+2 to Fig. 121+1

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (Soprano) and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 4/4.

System 1 (Fig. 119+2): The vocal line begins with the lyrics "fire: for the in-cur-a-ble dis-ease burns with-in with such tor-ment". The piano accompaniment features a "Cl." (Climax) marking and a "Susp. Cym." (Suspension, Cymbal) marking. The piano part includes a "cresc." (crescendo) marking.

System 2 (Fig. 120): The vocal line continues with "that the con-sum-ing ar-dor of fire will feel by con-trast like sooth-ing oil and a". The piano accompaniment includes markings for "Vins." (Vibrato) and "Fl." (Flute). The system ends with a measure in 3/4 time.

System 3 (Fig. 121+1): The vocal line concludes with "heal-ing bath in the Ho-ly stream." and "La-be-bad in dem Hei-li-gen Strom." The piano accompaniment features a "ff" (fortissimo) dynamic marking, a "Susp. Cym." marking, and a "p" (piano) dynamic marking. The system ends with a measure in 3/4 time.

structure the opera is largely a mix of Western sectional and through-composed forms, with the occasional use of the ternary aria. Such Western musical thinking stands in stark contrast to the improvisational structure of Indian music.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has highlighted two key questions in the context of this article: the extent to which Glanville-Hicks succeeded in synthesising Indian and Western musical practices, and whether Indian music can be accommodated within a Western musical framework without infringing upon its intrinsic meaning. Analysis of the opera has shown that Western compositional practices predominate, and that Glanville-Hicks's compositional roots remained close to the surface of her musical thinking. The use of harmony, particularly modal harmony, is widespread throughout the opera, despite Glanville-Hicks's claim that she had 'shed the harmonic dictatorship peculiar to modernists and [had] evolved a melody-rhythm structure that comes very close to the musical patterns of the antique world.'²⁴ The English pastoral

²⁴ Glanville-Hicks, liner note to *The Transposed Heads*.

style, a legacy from her early works, is far from expunged; the neoclassicism that underpinned the works of her 'middle' period remains a potent musical force; and the melodic writing, tonal usage, rhythmic process and form and structure are all based in Western compositional practice. It has also been shown that elements of Indian music manifest throughout the opera: in the use of drones and drone-like bass lines; in passages in which melody and rhythm predominate; in the fragmented, kaleidoscopically-shifting melodic patterns; and in the use of melodies that Glanville-Hicks claimed to be, or can be shown to be, of Indian origin. These Indian musical elements are invariably overlaid, however, with Western musical connotations, refracted through the lens of Western musical thinking. The synthesis of two musical systems that Glanville-Hicks claimed is not, then, supported by close analysis of the score.

The opera has been criticised for its amalgam of disparate styles. Paul Henry Lang, for example, commented:

Frankly I do not know how to judge this opera ... all I can report is that I heard a bewildering variety of tunes and styles that did not seem to have much in common, and there was an awful lot of tinkering and banging on gongs, marimbas and other noise makers ... I am afraid that this brave attempt at a musical mixed marriage just does not work.²⁵

Lang's criticism is not without justification and it could be suggested that Glanville-Hicks's 'synthesis' compromised not only the integrity of Indian music but also the integrity of the Western musical system. Indeed works written in Glanville-Hicks's two earlier stylistic periods were, arguably, more convincing than *The Transposed Heads*. The early song *Frolic* (circa 1934), for example, was a fine ambassador for the English pastoral style; and the *Concertino da Camera* (1946) was a wholly successful replication of Stravinskian neoclassicism. *The Transposed Heads*, on the other hand, fell stylistically between the cracks, neither English pastoral, neoclassical, melody-rhythm nor Indian.

There was, perhaps, a certain naivety in Glanville-Hicks's assumption that she could superimpose elements from one musical system onto another and achieve, ipso facto, synthesis. The music of any culture is, in a sense, its DNA fingerprint. Embedded within it are deep significations that convey a culture's philosophical underpinnings and customs. 'Music can express social attitudes and cognitive processes,' wrote John Blacking, 'but it is useful and effective only when it is heard by the prepared and receptive ears of people who have shared, or can share in some way, the cultural and individual experiences of its creators.'²⁶ Any relocation of musical elements from one culture to another, then, inevitably leaves behind the real meaning of that music. In this context it is notable that Glanville-Hicks's appropriation of Indian melodies ignored the fact that all ragas have appointed seasons of the year and hours of the day when they should be sung and played, such specifications having been formulated in past centuries in accordance with cosmic law.²⁷ According to Indian musical theory, ragas sung at the proper time and in the correct season possess supernatural powers.²⁸ Glanville-Hicks's incorporation

²⁵ Paul Henry Lang, 'The Transposed Heads,' *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 February 1958, 20.

²⁶ John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976) 54.

²⁷ Atiya Begum Fyzee-Rahamin, *The Music of India* (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979) 76.

²⁸ Fyzee-Rahamin, *Music of India*, 77.

of Indian melodies also failed to accommodate the microtonal intervals and varied inflections of pitch that are intrinsic to Indian music, the melodic material forced into the straight jacket of Western tempered pitch. And the Indian musical structure of protracted extemporisations on melodic and rhythmic cycles cannot be accommodated by Western forms which are by their very nature 'inadequate to the task of representing Indian music accurately.'²⁹ Glanville-Hicks's claim, then, that she incorporated Indian folk themes 'without doing violence to their unique character,' was at best naive and at worst culturally insensitive.³⁰ Indeed, she saw the unique contextual elements of Indian music as being of secondary value. Writing soon after her 1962 study tour of India, she noted:

The separation of fact from fancy, technique from metaphysics is a pressing need, not only as a panacea for local hair splitting, but to establish root factors (N. and S. Indian) from which a new twentieth century growth can spring. The general mish-mash of esoteric, mystical, mythological data that swamps musical thought also poses the greatest barrier to communication with the West, and, since it is secondary, not primary, should be re-evaluated and perhaps discarded.³¹

In appropriating the music of India Glanville-Hicks joined a long line of Western composers dating back to the colonisation of the country. Indian music had been, in a sense, another commodity to be exported back to Europe for Western consumption. As far back as the eighteenth century, transcriptions of Indian songs had been 'reshaped and absorbed back home in Britain,' the melodies mere 'vehicles for recomposition as popular songs.'³² There had been no attempt at an authentic reproduction of Indian music, and by the late nineteenth century 'a standardized musical orientalism had been created in which the cultural and musical distinctions between Africa, Arabia, Indonesia, and India blurred into one sensual, colourful, fantastic representation of the East.'³³ This representation, which infiltrated Western musical genres from parlour songs to grand opera, was the cultural antecedent to Glanville-Hick's *The Transposed Heads* and, not surprisingly, finds expression in the bland pseudo-orientalism of the opera. The shortcomings of Glanville-Hicks's representation of Indian music mirror those of composers of the preceding two hundred years, despite her conviction to the contrary.

This musical appropriation can profitably be seen in the context of the broader concept of 'Orientalism,' as set out by Edward Said in his definitive book of the same name. Said uses the term 'Orientalism' to mean several things. He sees it, for example, as:

the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.³⁴

²⁹ Gerry Farrell, *Indian Music and the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 8.

³⁰ Glanville-Hicks, liner note to *The Transposed Heads*.

³¹ Peggy Glanville-Hicks, letter to Chadbourne Gilpatrick, 7 July 1962, Peggy Glanville-Hicks Collection, Mitchell Library.

³² Farrell, *Indian Music*, 80–81.

³³ Farrell, *Indian Music*, 78–79, 81.

³⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin Books, 1995) 3.

From this perspective there is an implicit assumption of superiority. 'So far as the West was concerned during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,' writes Said, 'an assumption had been made that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West.'³⁵

Said also sees Orientalism as 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident,"'³⁶ and his book deals comprehensively with the representation—indeed the very creation—of 'the Orient' through Western writings:

Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on.³⁷

Moreover, writes Said, the Orient was 'almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.'³⁸ For Said, the discourse of Orientalism was the means by which Europe 'was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.'³⁹

Said's book specifically addresses the Anglo-French-American experience of the Near East but it has equal relevance to the Far East, and indeed the book goes on to be partly inclusive of the Far East in its later sections. Although music is scarcely mentioned, Said's analysis resonates as much with music as with literature and the other spheres and discourses with which he engages. Music can be seen, then, as another discourse through which the concept of Orientalism speaks, and Peggy Glanville-Hicks's *The Transposed Heads* is a case in point. It is notable that her interest in musics of the Near and Far East coincided with the escalation of US economic and political interests in the Middle East and Asia, and the corresponding growth in Oriental Studies in American universities, after the Second World War. This orientation to Eastern musics, one that was shared by other American composers at around the same time,⁴⁰ would appear to have been no coincidence and may well have stemmed from the American pre-occupation with the Orient after the war.

Glanville-Hicks's commentaries on *The Transposed Heads* reveal an implicit set of cultural assumptions that are wholly in line with Said's concept of Orientalism. In assuming the right to appropriate Indian musical materials, and in her conviction that the relocation of this material to a Western musical discourse did not in any way violate its essential character, Glanville-Hicks can be seen as part of the cultural imperialism, dating from the eighteenth century, that had accompanied Western economic and political imperialism. Whilst she saw non-Western folk musics as a source of renewal for twentieth-century Western art music, such appropriation

³⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 40–41.

³⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

³⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 2–3.

³⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 1.

³⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

⁴⁰ Glanville-Hicks had by that time taken American citizenship, and was a resident of New York.

occurred very within a Western paradigm. Eastern musical materials were being used, in effect, to prop up an ailing Western musical system, restructured so as to be comprehensible and palatable to a Western audience. Far from the synthesis of two musical systems that Glanville-Hicks proclaimed, the reality was that one was subsumed by the other.

This is not to condemn either Glanville-Hicks or her opera out of hand. It is, rather, to recognise the implicit cultural attitude that lies at the heart of both the libretto and the music itself. The opera preceded by some twenty-three years John Blacking's ground-breaking book *How Musical is Man?*, and the changing perceptions of non-Western musics that it precipitated. It also pre-dated by forty-two years Edward Said's critical and definitive work on the concept of Orientalism. Both Glanville-Hicks and her opera were products of their time; it was almost inevitable, then, that East meets West very much on Western terms in *The Transposed Heads*.