

Love and Loss, Homosexuality and Pacifism in Tippett's Song Cycle *The Heart's Assurance* (1950–51)

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This article has been prompted by a recent publication by Donald Mitchell on the nature of Benjamin Britten's pacifism, and its traces in his music.¹ Britten of course wrote several overtly pacifist works, beginning in the 1930s with music for a leftist Pacifist March and culminating in the imposing *War Requiem*.² Mitchell identifies a fundamental preoccupation of Britten with 'acts of violence, their consequences and the "climates" that unleash them,' citing a violent blow struck by Grimes in *Peter Grimes*, the rape of *The Rape of Lucretia* and various hunting allusions dating from the early work, *Our Hunting Fathers*.³ But of all Britten's contemporaries it is Tippett, Britten's friend and fellow-pacifist, whom Mitchell judges to be the only comparable composer-pacifist.

Why then, has there been no study of the pacifist content in Tippett's work?⁴ The answer is partly conditioned by Tippett's own gloss on his life, which quarantines pacifist activism to the period before 1945, and the cooperation of a biographer who blithely attributed what the composer admitted was 'revolutionary zeal' to youthful 'romantic fashion.'⁵ Although this *cordon sanitaire* is not perhaps as impenetrable as the one which Richard Taruskin argues has obfuscated discussion of Stravinsky's music, Tippett like Stravinsky lived a very long life, and thus for most of a century dictated the interpretation of his life and music.⁶ Understandably he was determined to cultivate a catholic public, and for this reason often stated his intentions to 'transmute' his own convictions and experiences into more universal (and less inherently

¹ Donald Mitchell, 'Violent Climates,' *Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 188–216.

² Tippett in 1977 called the *War Requiem* 'the one musical masterwork we possess with overt pacifist meanings.' Quoted in Mitchell, 'Violent Climates,' 206.

³ Mitchell, 'Violent Climates,' 189.

⁴ General remarks are often made about pacifism in relation to Tippett's opera, *King Priam* (1960) but the only study directly relating to Tippett's pacifism is Anthony Arblaster, 'The Music of Pacifism,' *Opera* (October 1999): 1152–56.

⁵ Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and His Music* (London: Oxford UP, 1984) 38.

⁶ Richard Taruskin, 'A Myth of the Twentieth Century: *The Rite of Spring*, the Tradition of the New, & "the Music Itself",' *Modernism / Modernity* 2.1 (1995): 6–7. The 'indefinable but indispensable notion of "music itself" acts as a *cordon sanitaire*, a quarantine staking out a decontamination space within which music can be composed, performed and listened to in a cultural and historical vacuum, that is, in perfect sterility.'

judgmental) statements.⁷ This is certainly the case for his song cycle, *The Heart's Assurance*, written in 1950–51 and dedicated to 'all those who lost their lives and loves in the brutality of battle.'⁸ Tippett chose as his texts five poems written by two of the most celebrated soldier-poets of the Second World War. With the aid of recently-discovered archival material I will contend here, however, that the 'battle' or the 'war' enshrined in this work, is metonymic of the battle within Tippett's psyche, that one war is in effect a code for the other. For Tippett's public identification as pacifist, and his feelings of segregation from the society which condoned war, mirrored a private sense of dislocation wrought by his identification as homosexual. For all the work's attempts at transmutation, it is an evocatively personal requiem for a myriad of losses, for which war provides an overarching and seemingly objective framework.

Tippett was too young to notice much of what happened in the First World War, and his sense of loss at the time appears to have been limited to regret at the departure of two of the family's parlour maids. In the 1920s and 1930s his bourgeois contemporaries were ashamed of their privileged position in an inequitable society, and blamed the calumnies of war, and the resulting economic Depression, on their reactionary elders. It was only when Tippett commenced at the Royal College of Music in the mid-1920s that he encountered the war, in the person of men—some of them lovers—who had lost limbs in war or who were permanently traumatised by their experience. 'So this is what happened,' he mused, 'to those young men I had heard in my teens going off singing cheerful songs like, "It's a long way to Tipperary".'⁹ After graduation Tippett became a conductor for choral groups sponsored by the Labour Party and in the early 1930s lived among unemployed miners in Yorkshire work camps, where he organised cooperative music-making. In 1935 he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain [CPGB] and wrote a drama condemning the slaughter of men at the front and the starvation of their families at home.¹⁰ He soon resiled from the CPGB but as a zealous Trotskyist and member of the Bolshevist-Leninist group of the Labour Party he did visit the local signalman in his signal box to attempt to effect a conversion. For a few years, at least, he enthusiastically propounded the music of Eisler and hankered for political revolution. For a time, the communist newspaper *The Daily Worker* actively promoted peace marches and peace conferences while condemning armament manufacturers and bankers as perpetrators of the class war. But the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 provoked a quandary for leftwing pacifists and many, like Tippett, were forced to rethink their allegiances. In 1935 Tippett was one of thousands who had sent the Rev. Dick Sheppard a postcard saying 'I renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly, will I support or sanction another.' This proved the beginnings of the spectacularly successful Peace Pledge Union [PPU], and Tippett's enduring association with it.

Tippett's ongoing encounter with the first war was with through its literature (and 'Oh what a literary war' it was, as Paul Fussell has so fluently argued).¹¹ Numerous literary accounts

⁷ Tippett devised a rule, stating 'that while the collective, mythological material is always traditional, the specific twentieth-century quality is the power to transmute such material into an immediate experience of our day.' Michael Tippett, 'The Birth of an Opera,' *Moving into Aquarius* (London: Paladin, 1984) 57.

⁸ Michael Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* (London: Hutchinson, 1991) 187.

⁹ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 45.

¹⁰ Tippett wrote in the preface to *The War Ramp* that he was dramatising 'the irreconcilable clash between payment for war in arms and legs, and payment for war in money.' Quoted in Kemp, *Tippett*, 35.

¹¹ This is the title of Fussell's chapter 5. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford UP, 1975).

of war were published from the 1920s: Eric Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930) and the autobiographical accounts of Robert Graves were particularly widely read. Sassoon and Vera Brittain were active supporters of the PPU, while other literary figures such as Virginia Woolf and Rebecca West at least made their pacifism public. Tippett believed that the quintessential war poet Wilfred Owen was 'always close to me in spirit' and quoted his poetry more than once in the text of the work gestating in the late 1930s, *A Child of Our Time*.¹² The poet's theme, of the loss of innocent manhood, is there represented by a naive Jewish 'lad' whose crime of passion triggered one of the most brutal pre-war pogroms. War, as Tippett explained, is incompatible

with the concept I hold of what a man is at all. That good men do these acts I am well aware. But I hold their actions to spring from an inability or unwillingness to face the fact that modern wars are debasing all our moral coinage to a greater degree than we are gaining anything politically valuable.¹³

When war was declared, 2.2 per cent of those eligible to fight registered as conscientious objectors, the highest percentage recorded over the duration of the war.¹⁴ By March 1940 the numbers had fallen to 1.6 per cent, and they eventually fell to 0.5 per cent. Each of those who registered faced a hearing before a tribunal to which they could submit a statement and call witnesses. Each could apply for unconditional exemption or could do alternative non-combatant work, whether within the army or, as was often the case, as farm labourers or miners. Artists fared well from this system, Britten for instance winning a total exemption, as did a dancer for whom George Bernard Shaw testified that 'Skilled dancers are very scarce and their recreative value for tired soldiers enormous.'¹⁵ Of the 62,000 who faced a Tribunal, 2,937 won exemptions. Most who did not were assigned demoralising manual labour far from their homes; those who appealed and were unsuccessful ended up in prison. Tippett was not as well-known as Britten (or not as well-known to the establishment) and faced the options of becoming an RAF librarian or a choral director for the national fire service, or a term in prison. The choice was clear.

Apart from the fact that I could never shoot or commit deliberate acts of violence against other individual human beings, let alone groups, there were simply two issues that mattered. ... I would brook no interference with my composition work, which I felt was the most valuable thing I could do; the other was a matter of principle—why should I be privileged and evade imprisonment by doing officially approved cultural or educational work, while other pacifists, particularly the younger ones, were defenceless?¹⁶

Still a soldier of the class war, Tippett seems to have courted prison.

¹² Michael Tippett, 'T.S. Eliot and *A Child of Our Time*,' *Tippett on Music*, ed. Meirion Bowen (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 115.

¹³ Michael Tippett, 'The Composer and Pacifism,' *Tippett on Music* 283.

¹⁴ Statistics regarding numbers of Conscientious Objectors are taken from Caroline Moorehead, *Troublesome People: Enemies of War 1916–86* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987).

¹⁵ Moorehead, *Troublesome People* 155.

¹⁶ Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* 120–21.

On 21 June 1943 he appeared before the local police court with Vaughan Williams (who severely disapproved)¹⁷ and Eva Hubback (who disapproved as well, but perhaps not so vociferously), as well as David Ayerst and Peter Pears, to testify on his behalf, and was sentenced to the minimum period of three months in Wormwood Scrubs. There he joined about one hundred other COs sewing mailbags and labouring over letters to friends.¹⁸ To one he wrote,

Its not martyrdom at all—its just that a certain sort of integrity lands you in a certain sort of conduct wh[ich] appears even pig-headed. ... In a world total war that vision becomes instinctively pacifist, & is as instinctively distrusted by authority.¹⁹

He would have been aware that the BBC prohibited broadcast of his music while he was in prison, but may not have known that one staffer clumped him with 'the gang of Conscientious (!) Objectors and general slackers.'²⁰ Prison was exhausting but revelatory, he wrote to another friend,

I realised that the old shame & fear was hiding behind the pacifism, just as it has hid behind physical cowardice of adolescence & homosexuality of later years—& this time I seem to have accepted it more fully—so that I feel I have the strength to walk towards or backwards to live in the light or the shadow, to be the respectable member of society or the conchie-scapegoat.²¹

To someone taking a moral but not religious stand against war, prison seemed to reinforce his convictions. He appears to have had little personal contact with those who fought; rather his experience of the effects of war were of aerial bombardment. Earlier that year when his father was outside gardening he was felled by a bomb aimed at Exeter Cathedral. He died a year later. In the summer of 1944 Tippett was constantly having his windows blown open by the force of bombing which in August flattened the house next to his, killing a young mother. But of all these, his greatest loss occurred in April 1945 when Francesca Allinson, one of his closest woman friends, committed suicide. He mourned her death as 'part of the price' of war. But, as his outpouring of grief suggested, it may too have been the result of his inability to love her as she deserved.²²

¹⁷ In a letter to Adrian Boult written on 19 June 1943, Tippett wrote 'We shall fight the case on its merits, according to the technical matter of "Reasonable excuse." Vaughan Williams is taking the trouble to come over from Dorking. 1. to express his severe disapproval of my views 2. his milder disapproval of the Min of Labour in this issue. My own instinct is that there will be sentence given.' Quoted in Lewis Foreman, 'Forging a Relationship and a Role: Michael Tippett and the BBC, 1928–51,' *Michael Tippett: Music and Literature*, ed. Suzanne Robinson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 139.

¹⁸ In a letter to Evelyn Maude dated 19 July 1943 he wrote that he was closest to her, Benjamin Britten and John Amis. Quoted in Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues* 151.

¹⁹ Tippett, letter to Grace Edwards, n.d., quoted in Foreman, 'Forging a Relationship' 139.

²⁰ Letter from Clarence Raybould to Elizabeth Poston, 25 January 1945, quoted in Foreman, 'Forging a Relationship' 141.

²¹ Tippett, letter to Francesca Allinson, [1942], quoted in *Twentieth Century Blues* 132.

²² After her death, Tippett wrote to David Ayerst, 'We were both marked as so many of our generation have been—but perhaps my career especially got in the way & she is part of the price. We never learn about real loss till it is there in our persons. Her going is less perhaps than the maiming & death of so many young folk, children, mothers in this lunatic power-driven world. But I know it sharper. She was a lovely love creature as I feel, & lived her birthright out with courage—poor lamb.' Quoted in *Those Twentieth Century Blues* 186. Chapter 7 of Tippett's book is titled 'The Heart's Assurance' and is devoted to an account of his conscientious objection, concluding with Allinson's death.

Out of his embitterment came *The Heart's Assurance*. Tippett's private account of the work mentions a 'personal wound' which healed as the 'very real wounds of the war healed.'²³ The term has a profound autobiographical significance. In a series of lectures he presented in the 1970s he referred to a division in his psyche as a wound, a concept he took from W. H. Auden.²⁴ In a confessional moment in an interview in 1995 he discussed his relationship to Allinson, and their failure to embark on marriage, as manifestation of this 'wound.'²⁵ What he did not state there, was that he had contemplated marriage in response to the collapse of the most intensely emotional relationship of his life, that with a young painter, Wilfred Franks. This sequence of events is paralleled in Auden's life, and is captured in the 'Letter to a Wound' included in Auden's lengthy poem, *The Orators*. At the time of writing Auden had recently rejected marriage, even though he identified marriage with maturity and homosexuality with a kind of prolonged adolescence. The title of the letter is a pun on a literal wound which Auden carried at the time, an anal fissure which he jokingly referred to as 'the stigmata of Sodom.'²⁶ Had it been a war wound Auden might have borne it as the mark of a manly warrior (but, he lamented, 'the muscular shall lounge in bars; the puny shall keep diaries in classical Greek').²⁷ Instead his 'letter' reads as a letter to the beloved, 'For a long time now I have been aware that you are taking up more of my life every day.' The wound emphasises the poet's sense of alienation, which is explicitly sexual, 'once, when a whore accosted me, I bowed, "I deeply regret it, Madam, but I have a friend"'. The location of the 'beloved' as a mark on the poet's body emphasises its basis in neurosis. Auden concludes,

It's getting late and I have to be up betimes in the morning. You are so quiet these days that I get quite nervous, remove the dressing. No I am safe, you are still there. The wireless this evening says that the frost is coming. When it does, we know what to expect, don't we? But I am calm. I can wait. The surgeon was dead right. Nothing will ever part us.²⁸

Auden must have known the myth of Philoctetes, a Greek warrior who possesses a magic bow capable of ensuring victory in the war with Troy, but who, because he suffers an incurable and repulsive wound, is ostracised and abandoned on an island. In about 1944 Tippett read

²³ An unsourced quotation from Tippett made in Kemp, *Tippett*, 299.

²⁴ 'I know that there must be an element in which the psyche is left open to the wounds. [Nonetheless] I'm certain that, if I cleaned away the division in my own psyche, I would clean away some element of apprehension of what our world is.' Michael Tippett, *E. William Doty Lectures in Fine Arts*, 2nd series 1976 (Austin, Texas: College of Fine Arts, U of Texas at Austin, 1979) 12.

²⁵ Quoted in *Tippett's Time*, ed. Derek Jones (London: Channel 4, 1995) 10.

²⁶ Auden, quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, *W.H. Auden: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1992) 109. 'Letter to a Wound' was written in 1931 and, according to Kemp (*Tippett*, 25), Auden showed the manuscript to Tippett in spring of the following year. The 'Letter' is based on the Lawrentian idea that the unity of body and mind is prevented by psychosomatic illness, but is welcomed by the sufferer and deeply loved.

²⁷ Book 1, section II of *The Orators*, in *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927-1939*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1977) 71, which is followed by 'Letter to a Wound.' Auden wrote in his 1929 journal that 'All buggers ... suffer under the reproach, real or imaginary of "Call yourself a man."' Quoted in Richard Bozorth, "'Whatever You Do Don't Go to the Wood:" Joking, Rhetoric, and Homosexuality in *The Orators*,' *W.H. Auden: The Language of Learning and the Language of Love*, Auden Studies 2, ed. Katherine Bucknell and Nicholas Jenkins (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 134. On Auden's crisis of masculinity, see also Marsha Bryant, 'Auden and the Homerotics of the 1930s Documentary,' *Mosaic* 30.2 (June 1997): 69-92.

²⁸ *The Orators*, in *The English Auden*, ed. Mendelson, 73.

Edmund Wilson's essay, 'Philoctetes: The Wound and the Bow,' which reads Sophocles's version as well as André Gide's, and develops the theory

that genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound up together. It is significant that the only two writers of our time who have especially interested themselves in Philoctetes—André Gide and John Jay Chapman—should both be persons who have not only, like the hero of the play, stood at an angle to the morality of society and defended their position with stubbornness, but who have suffered from psychological disorders which have made them, in Gide's case, ill-regarded by his fellows.²⁹

Tippett immediately wrote to Allinson of the myth's potential for operatic translation. In his reflections on its kinship to elements of the opera scenario he was then drafting he mused on the magic weapon as a 'profound dream symbol ... a sexual weapon & many other things (modern war & revolution).'³⁰ He must also have recognised that he too would never part from his 'personal wound,' and longed for the magic bow of redemption.

Thus it is now apparent that *The Heart's Assurance* began not simply as a memorial to a friend, but as an exploration of the mysteries of an inability to accept a woman's love or to conform to conventional morality. For his texts Tippett chose three poems ('Song,' 'Compassion,' and 'The Dancer') by Alun Lewis, a young Welsh non-combatant killed accidentally in Burma in 1944. When Lewis's first collection of poetry was published in 1942 he was hailed as 'the war poet that people had been waiting for.'³¹ A further two poems ('Song: The Heart's Assurance' and 'Remember Your Lovers'), including the one which provides the title of the work, are by Sidney Keyes, who died mysteriously while serving in Africa at the age of twenty, and who was for some the most important poet of that war. Both were pacifist by nature. Lewis is described as 'a divided man' struggling with the conflict between his active and contemplative natures, distressed at having to participate in war and being unable to pursue creative work. Some said Keyes had a 'split personality,' crazy as he said 'with the utter futility, destructiveness and emptiness' of his life, for whom love was 'a sort of battle and one that never brings any victory, but only unrest and passion.'³² Both wrote of the tribulations of love: Lewis left a wife in Wales and a lover in India, while Keyes was profoundly affected by the end of an affair which had taken place while he was a student at Oxford.

The first, third and fifth poems are demonstrably poems of war, the first addressing a soldier lad, the third depicting a wife tending the bloodied wounds of a dying man, and the last, more universally portraying young men in 'the carven beds of death.' Additionally, each addresses the subject of love, predominantly that of husband and wife. Significantly the speaking voice is only rarely that of a participant, the personal 'I.' In the first poem a third person speaks of the soldier and his wife, and in the third the tale is told by a 'compassionate' onlooker. In the fourth, the eponymous dancer appears to be a woman, ' "Had he not died we would have wed, / And still I'd dance", the dancer said.' The only occurrence of the first

²⁹ Edmund Wilson, 'Philoctetes: The Wound and the Bow,' *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1941) 289.

³⁰ Michael Tippett, letter to Francesca Allinson, [1944], reprinted in *Those Twentieth Century Blues* 168.

³¹ Bernard Bergonzi, *Wartime and Aftermath: English Literature and Its Background 1939–60* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 72.

³² Quoted in Linda M. Shires, *British Poets of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 104–5.

person is a single statement in the second poem where that person refers to 'you,' 'my lovely.' Unusually, the voice of the last poem is that of the collective pronoun 'we,' who remind already dead 'young men' of the love they shared. Merely the knowing of Tippet's memorial to Allinson, however, cues the listener to hear Tippet's voice: the impersonality of the first poem he chose giving way to words he could well have spoken to her. There the poet apologises for his intransigence,

O never never trust the heart's assurance
Trust only the heart's fear.
And there too is evidence of competing claims,
'For the careless heart is bound with chains
And terribly cast down.'

Similarly, in the fourth poem it is through the voice of the dancer that he can state, 'Our love was always ringed with dread / Of death' and acknowledge that despite her death he will continue to 'dance to earn my bread.' The Yeatsian dance is a very powerful metaphor in Tippet's armoury and is typically set, as it is here, in melismatic effusions which emphasise his conviction that poets must be both 'grim and gay.'³³

I will concentrate on the last of the five, an invocation to 'Remember your Lovers.' Tippet imagined here a scene of a 'young woman singing out over the Elysian fields to the young men in the fields beyond.'³⁴

Young men walking the open streets
Of death's republic, remember your lovers.
When you foresaw with vision prescient
The planet pain rising across your sky
We fused your sight in our soft burning beauty
We laid you down in meadows drunk with cowslips
And led you in the ways of our bright city.

Young men who wander death's vague meadows
Remember your lovers who gave you more than flowers,
When you woke grave chilled at midnight
To pace the pavements of your bitter dream
We brought you back to bed and brought you home,
From the dark antechamber of desire
Into our lust as bright as candleflame.

Young men who lie in the carven beds of death,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than dreams.
From the sun shell'ring your careless head

³³ On 16 September 1943 Tippet wrote to Allinson, 'these seem queer dream-like days within this war— "gay & grim"—that spruch of Yeats, that's kept by me' (quoted in *Twentieth Century Blues* 165). In his opera *The Midsummer Marriage* (1955) and in a later lecture, Tippet quoted the last lines of Yeats's poem 'Lapis Lazuli' (1938) 'All things fall and are built again / And those that build them again are gay.' Yeats's meaning, according to Tippet, is to contrast 'in a present period of disintegration, gaiety against self-pity.' Michael Tippet, 'The Relation of Autobiographical Experience to the Created Work of Art,' *With Great Pleasure* (BBC broadcast) NP 8845WR C1, National Sound Archive, British Library.

³⁴ Michael Tippet, 'Music and Poetry' (1961), *Recorded Sound* 17 (January 1965): 291.

Or from the painted devil your quick eye,
 We led you out of terror tenderly
 And fooled you into peace with our soft words
 And gave you all we had and let you die.

Young men drunk with death's unquenchable wisdom,
 Remember your lovers who gave you more than love—

The voice or, more accurately, voices of the poem are of the lovers, who remind 'young men' of love which is an antidote to pain. Their sex is not identified, although the 'flowers' and 'soft words' suggest the speakers are women. They could, equally, be men. Notwithstanding Tippett's imagined scene of a young woman, the songs were, after all, written for Peter Pears and are usually sung by a tenor. The visual and audible *double entendre* this establishes then allows for a reading which encompasses both public and private meanings.

Undoubtedly the men—presumably soldiers—are already dead, having flirted with death and been torn between its 'unquenchable wisdom' and the peace they were fooled into by their lovers. Each of the first three stanzas begins with two lines of a plea addressed to the 'Young men,' using the imagery of the city, the meadow, and the tomb. They are followed by a line commencing with the word 'When,' allowing for memories of pain and bitterness, while the fifth of the seven lines begins with the word 'We,' being the lovers' reminder of a mutual past. Tippett honours the poet with a strictly syllabic and uncomplicated, predominantly tonal, setting. The first line of each stanza always begins with an unaccompanied rising fifth, the 'pure' interval made funereal by its statement in minims. Poetic stresses are underlined by distribution of triadic consonances on stressed beats, most colourfully in the case of the second syllable of 'remember,' accompanied in the first instance by a major triad on the leading note (see Ex. 1). In this way Tippett suggests a contrast between the dark place of the young

Example 1. Tippett, 'Remember your Lovers,' bb.1-3.

Andante ma con moto ♩ = 56-60
f ad lib.

Voice
 Young men walk - ing the o - pen streets Of death's re - pub - lic, re

Piano

ff ten.
 mem - ber your lov - ers.

subito ff ten.
poco a poco dim.

Example 2. Tippett, 'Remember your Lovers,' bb.32–34.

The musical score for Example 2 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 32-34. The vocal line starts with the lyrics 'We (chaleureux) brought you back to bed and'. The piano accompaniment features a series of chords, many of which are triplets. The second system continues the vocal line with 'brought you home,' and the piano accompaniment continues with similar chordal textures. Dynamics and articulation markings such as *p dolce*, *cresc.*, *p*, and *poco f. ten.* are used throughout the score.

mens' consignment and memories of happier times. In only a few places he allows himself a poignant appoggiatura—in the first stanza for the recollections of 'beauty' and 'cowslips,' in the second for 'lust'—or splashes of colourful remote major triads when the lovers themselves ('We') are recalled.

We can read an intensely personal statement in what are literal memories encoded in the score. The pervading accompanimental texture of the first movement is echoed for the scene of the meadows drunk with cowslips, implying that the memories are of an English arcadia.³⁵ That they are given such pastoral connotations is typical of English war poetry and as Fussell has demonstrated, of the memories of First World War soldiers.³⁶ More evocatively, the opening ascending fifth is an unmistakable reference to the 'Last Post,' and therefore to the fallen of the Great War. Its iridescent setting of the word 'remember' is also an echo of the 'magic' of Purcell's setting of that word, which Tippett cherished.³⁷ Finally, in the piano at the word 'home' there is a deliberate allusion to the opening bars of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto (Ex. 2).³⁸ From this it is evident that Tippett derived this song's persistent accompanimental figures from the Beethoven example, but it is precisely at this point, 'We brought you back to bed and

³⁵ Keyes himself is reminding the reader in the words 'We laid you down in meadows drunk with cowslips' of the 'green pastures' of Psalm 23.

³⁶ According to Fussell, 'Recourse to the pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamities of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against them.' Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* 235.

³⁷ See Tippett, 'Music and Poetry,' 289. Meirion Bowen points out the various settings of this word in Tippett's work, and their origins in Dido's Lament. Bowen, *Michael Tippett* (New York: Robson Books Parkwest, 1998) 74.

³⁸ While the reference is here clearly audible, its intention is confirmed by Meirion Bowen's comment that 'the piano's entry with repeated chords [hint] at the poetic opening of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto.' Bowen, *Michael Tippett* 74.

brought you *home*,’ that the piano chords are closest in register and rhythm to the original. Tippett is honouring one of the ‘gods’ in his pantheon, indicating perhaps that for him his greatest love is music. And, as he often recalled, this was the period in which he committed himself to composition above all else.

The pacifist sentiment of *The Heart’s Assurance* can be detected in the portrayal of a Fall from an Edenic state at the opening. In retrospect the time before the war is portrayed as idyllic, not only for the flourishing of English pacifism but because the absence of war endowed on lovers the possibility of ‘the heart’s assurance.’ Tippett’s memorial to the war and its losses is sincere, and the poetry he chose sufficiently generalised to be able to mourn those who died, those maimed, and those at home bereaving. But the general Fall is paralleled by a personal one. There is more than a hint in Tippett’s choice of poetry of his horror at the destruction of so much youthful manhood. With the guttering of his relationship with Franks coinciding with the onset of war Tippett seemed to conclude that his experience of ‘bright lust’ and ‘soft burning beauty,’ or even of a ‘shelt’ring’ arm, lay in the past. Tippett may have believed his ‘personal wounds’ would never heal—in the dual sense of the psychological ‘wound’ which caused the ruptures and the emotional ‘wounds’ which resulted—but it is plain from his musical setting that he also knew that for him it is in music that ‘what’s transfigured will live on / Long after Death has come and gone.’³⁹

³⁹ ‘We [creative artists] respond to the inner life from deep inside ourselves; it seems so unknown to us, except through works of art. We seem to have no other way of setting it out before ourselves except through works of art. The life that is transfigured lives on, even in solid stone: this is one of the magical mysteries of art.’ Tippett, ‘Music and Poetry’ 291.