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Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music

CHRISTOPHER BALLANTINE

NO musical style begins *ab ovo*. In the history of Western music, the emergence of a new style is marked by an incessant process of rupture, as each new piece simultaneously situates itself in an already-formed style and tears itself free of that style. The new piece is defined partly in terms of the distance it manages to put between itself and the stylistic type that characterizes it. To this extent, parody is fundamental to all art — indeed to all communication — since each new work of art must in some way follow established precedent. But although this is normally a “simple” dialectical process, in that the new piece — the new style — is born from the womb of one immediately preceding it, this is not always the case. Sometimes the new piece will appropriate features of styles to which it is related only distantly or not at all. It is these stylistic leaps, the unheralded appearance of atavistic or exogenous traits as part of a new art work, that dramatically attract attention to themselves and raise questions that call for a systematic answer. The simplest and most basic of these questions is: What does the incorporation of these foreign elements *mean*?

This question has received scant attention from musicologists, and composers themselves have done little to illuminate it. Perhaps this lacuna is nowhere more noticeable than in the music of Charles Ives. It is to the particular consideration of this problem, as it occurs in Ives’s music, that the present essay is primarily devoted. At the same time, the theoretical perspectives which evolve during the course of the essay are sufficiently fundamental to have a range of application far wider than their immediate subject matter; it is

therefore hoped that they will prove helpful in the understanding of the use of quotation and parody in the work of composers other than Ives.¹

I

In Ives, previously existing music composed in a different (generally popular) style is introduced into a new composition for the sake of its *semantic connotations*. It is clear, however, that when a borrowed fragment is quoted it is not normally with the simple intention of evoking the fragment's original occasion — a barn dance, a circus parade, a church service — in all its erstwhile immediacy. The quotation is by no means an attempt by Ives merely to transcribe his aural experiences: an average New Englander of Ives's day would surely have found only a superficial correspondence between his and Ives's aural recollection of, say, the Fourth of July. But if literal transcription is not the point then manifestly some other purpose is being served. This purpose is the communication of an *attitude* toward that original occasion — a way not only of hearing but also of responding, feeling, relating, thinking — which is incarnated in the dialectic between, on the one hand, the fragment and the association it activates — its role as a *symbol* — and, on the other, the new musical context.

The general structure of this process is more complex than might at first appear and needs to be examined at some length from a theoretical point of view. In principle, the incorporation of borrowed material can take place anywhere along a continuum: at the one hypothetical extreme, the original meaning of the quotation can be unimpaired; at the other, the quotation can be totally stripped of its original meaning. Between these two extremes, an infinite variety of possibilities exists that always involves a complex dialectic between the quoted fragment, its new treatment, and its new context — that is, between (1) the original musical utterance, or “linguistic act”; (2) the audition (reproduction) of that act; and (3) the utterance of the new composition. Since it is precisely the new setting

¹ Other composers who would seem to be likely candidates for similar treatment include (in differing degrees) Liszt, Bruckner, Mahler, Busoni, Debussy, Satie, *Les Six*, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Janáček, Bartók, Martinů, Weill, Berg, Vaughan Williams, Tippett, Stockhausen, Berio, Maxwell Davies, Pousseur, and Penderecki. The net could be thrown even wider: one might also include the Gothic motet, Bob Dylan, and the Beatles.

that reproduces the original utterance — i.e. the treatment is itself part of the new context — for practical purposes categories (2) and (3) merge. This simplifies the process to a dialectic of two linguistic acts: that of the original, and that of the new composition. In fact, the new composition *is* precisely this dialectic.

Furthermore, for every quoted musical fragment in a piece, one can discover a process consisting formally of three aspects:

1. An extraneous fragment is “chosen.”
2. A dialectic — which may include a distortion of the fragment — exists between the fragment, with its semantic associations, and the new musical context.
3. The new context has primacy over the fragment, by providing the structure through which the fragment, its associations, and its interrelations are to be understood.

For a model that is particularly helpful to an understanding of the structure and dynamics of this process, we might look to a realm far removed from that of ordinary musicological discourse: the theory of dreams and their symbols. While any full account of dream theory would have to differentiate between various schools of thought, for our purpose we need note only the following substantial areas of agreement:

1. The dreamer “chooses” fragments of his past, which achieve symbolic import in the dream.
2. These fragments are “never — not even when it seems so to us — a mere repetition of preceding experiences or events”;² they have been distorted by such processes as (in Freudian terminology) “condensation” and “displacement,” and as symbols connoting a wide field of associations they are woven into the fabric of the dream and establish the dialectic of the “dream-text.”
3. The “dream-text” has primacy over the symbols inasmuch as it organizes them and their relationships and provides the framework according to which “the whole context surrounding the symbol is drawn into the question and examined.”³

² Jolande Jacobi, *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*, trans. Ralph Manheim, 7th ed. (London 1968), p. 74.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

The homology between this structure and that outlined previously in relation to musical quotation will be obvious.

We can assert, then (in relation to Ives, but clearly to other composers as well), the existence of some order of correspondence between a dream and a composition which quotes old materials. But one essential and fairly obvious difference is that the dream is private, whereas the composition is public. The correspondence between the dream and the composition certainly does not mean that there is a *simple* correspondence between dreamer and composer. If that were so, the affective sense of the composition would to a very large extent remain inaccessible to us. Rather, we shall need to postulate that a more real correspondence exists between dreamer and audience — where the term “audience” comprises those who share, with each other and with the composer, a common world of meanings, significations, and associations. Of course, this distinction — that the dreamer corresponds to the audience (including the composer) and not *simply* to the composer — is not by any means a rigid one. There may inevitably be some associations and symbolic meanings in the composition accessible only to the composer; and there is always the possibility of a wholly “private” composition. But these are matters which will be discussed at a later stage. Here our analogy can immediately be developed further. When an audience listens to a composition making use of parody or quotations from the “public” realm, and when a composer writes such a piece, both audience and composer have the prerogative of *thinking about* the piece in an attempt to bring its insights into the rational and intellectual realm. At such times they assume the role of “critics.” In our analogy, the interpretive and evaluative role of the *critic* in relation to the *composition-text* corresponds precisely to the interpretive and therapeutic role of the *analyst* in relation to the *dream-text*. And the composer’s role has affinities with that of the analyst in another sense too. The dream is created passively, the composition actively — or rather through a mutual interplay of active and passive. This means (in the language of the dream) that the composer intervenes in the creation of his own “dream” and, in doing so, he is composer-analyst.

These two basic processes — the creation and the interpretation of the dream-text, and the creation and interpretation of the composition-text — may in fact be more than simply analogous. In an important sense, they may perhaps be fundamentally identical; they

may be the *same* process, but manifested in two dissimilar forms. If this is so, and if it is true that parody of some kind is fundamental to music itself, then we have another, and vitally important, basis for arguing for the healing power, the implications for growth, of music — or at any rate “art music.” Dreams, we might say, tap the *private* unconscious (leaving aside the rather different question of the Jungian “collective” unconscious); music (in varying degrees all the arts) taps the *social* unconscious. Dreams show the points of growth in the personal unconscious; music the points of growth in the social unconscious. Dreams deal with distortions in the person because of *repression*; music with distortions in society because of *oppression*. Dreams unmask the ideology of the individual; music unmasks the ideology of society.

Finally, if “art music” is correctly perceived as the unmasking of social ideology, this may explain the significance of the incorporation of folk and popular melody (or its characteristics) in “art music.” Its incorporation could reveal for bourgeois and aristocratic audiences the real foundations — musical and cultural — hidden by the distortions of their ideological everyday consciousness.

II

Two basic types of association should be distinguished: where the quoted musical material itself involves words (whether present or absent), and where it does not. Ives uses both techniques. As an instance of the latter, consider the last section of the final movement of his String Quartet No. 2. The previous movement is subtitled “Arguments,” and this final movement, “The Call of the Mountains.” These final twenty-one measures are a beautiful example of a musical quotation fully in the service of a pregnant association. Situated in a “visionary” D major with whole-tone-scale underpinnings (in the second violin and cello), they symbolize the regular peal of four giant carillons, one for each instrument. The image is made precise and particular by the quotation of “Westminster Chimes” (formerly known as “Cambridge Quarters”) in the first violin (see Ex. 1).

No cathedral city will ever *sound* like this heavenly evocation; but the purpose is not to suggest, programmatically, that having ascended the mountain the sound of bells is carried on the air to the

Ex. 1

The musical score for Example 1 consists of four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The music is written in D major and 3/4 time. The first violin part features a melodic line with triplets and sixteenth-note patterns. The second violin part provides a counter-melody with similar rhythmic motifs. The viola and cello parts play a steady, rhythmic accompaniment with triplets. A measure number '130' is marked above the first violin staff.

heights from the valley below. Rather, this carillon image — unworldly though it is — is fraught with associations of majesty, awe, and revelation. The associative sound is now purified and intensified through its musical treatment as an *organized* polyphony of peals (in a rarefied D major) and is secularized through being sundered from its “cathedral” setting and placed in a “mountain” setting. This distortion of the image and the beatification of its associations — precisely *this* quotation of chiming — are what make Ives’s point: which we might suggest (bearing in mind the “musical disagreements” in the previous movement) by saying that the unity of man with his own kind, and the surpassing of the duality of man and nature, are to be perceived in terms of a privileged — indeed transcendental — moment of illumination such as that portrayed here in music.

A more succinct example is the general area of association which Ives appears to intend by his incorporation in the *Concord Sonata* of the four-note figure from Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. If, as we are bound to do, we take as highly relevant Ives’s subtitle for the sonata — *Concord, Mass., 1840-1860*; if we also bear in mind that of the three Concord heroes commemorated in this sonata, Emerson, and Thoreau in particular were passionate and articulate abolitionists, and that abolition itself was deeply ingrained in Ives’s national heritage; then, as David Wooldridge has argued, the following association seems highly plausible: “Beethoven’s 5th = ‘Fate knocking at the door’ = The Clenched Fist = Abolition.”⁴

⁴ Charles Ives: *A Portrait* (London, 1975), p. 305.

The other associational technique (in which the quoted musical material *does* involve words) is also used by Ives. This technique was very frequently used by Bach, when he incorporated well-known Lutheran chorale melodies in his own compositions. The tunes would appear without words, or with a different text, but Bach could depend on his listeners to “associate” the familiar words and thus discover a deeper significance in the work. If a listener does know the absent text of a quoted hymn tune or other word-associated melody, then the significance can be very rich indeed. An example is the quotation of the opening phrase of the hymn “There is a fountain” at the end of Ives’s song, “West London.” Ives’s piece is a setting of Matthew Arnold’s sonnet about a London tramp’s daughter who lets the haughty rich pass by, but begs from laboring men — “sharers in a common fate”; the poem ends with the platitudinous optimism that the girl’s spirit “points us to a better time than ours.” Ives gives these final words a grand, even bombastic, setting in F major — but then concludes the song with a wordless F-sharp major quotation from the beginning of Lowell Mason’s hymn setting of William Cowper’s gory poem:

There is a fountain fill’d with blood
 Drawn from Emanuel’s veins;
 And sinners drench’d beneath its flood
 Lose all their guilty stains. . . .

This musical quotation has the effect of subtly and ironically overthrowing Arnold’s “easy” optimism, since it connotes, by association back to the absent text, the idea of a purification by blood. And this ironic reversal is made especially forceful by virtue of the melodic similarity that exists between the bombastic culmination

Ex. 2

And points us to a bet-ter time,

and the wordless fragment that immediately follows:

Ex. 3

Moreover, the bombastic phrase is itself a full flowering of the vocal line with which the song begins:

Ex. 4

Crouch'd on the pave-ment,

Seen from this perspective, Ives's quotation — and the final perspective of the song — suggests: could we not have drawn this *difficult* (unpleasant, understated) implication from what came before, rather than the *easy* (platitudinous, overstated) one? But whatever the exact tenor of the irony, the essential theoretical issue is that none of the textual connotations of the fragment will have any significance for a listener not familiar with at least the opening words of the hymn.

In certain of Ives's works, it is possible to trace an intricate *web* of associations arising from an interplay of two or more quoted hymn tunes or other word-linked melodies. Ives's Fourth Symphony uses this as one of its associational techniques; a brief analysis of the first movement, the "Prelude," will reveal something of the complexities of which this procedure is capable.

The opening of the work immediately presents a conflict: a passionate two-measure outburst on strings, piano, and trumpet — fiercely chromatic and destructive of tonal sense, and rhythmically complex — is contrasted immediately with a disguised fragment of Lowell Mason's "Bethany," sounded very quietly by some of the prescribed "distant choir" of two solo violins, solo viola, and harp, together with an *ad libitum* flute. The fragment is ephemeral, elusive, and fragile and after only one measure is submerged in the resumed passionate outburst. "Bethany" (a hymn beginning "Nearer my God to Thee . . .") is to play an important part in the work, a

role that is vital to an understanding of the symphony, and its embryonic presence, in the third measure, is to be noted for more than simply establishing an immediate dynamic contrast with the rhetorical exordium. In fact the fragment hangs over most of the "Prelude" statically, not developing or gaining in precision, and, according to Ives's instructions, "scarcely to be heard, as faint sounds in the distance"; it is always played by the so-called "distant choir." But its symbolic function grows in definition during the movement.

The introduction of Mason's "Watchman" (with an optional chorus to sing the words) clarifies the questioning nature of the movement and of the work as a whole. This Advent or Epiphany hymn is a dialogue between the Watchman and the Traveller, who inquires of the Watchman: ". . . tell us of the night,/What the signs of promise are . . . aught of joy or hope," and is assured, ". . . o'er yon mountain's height,/See that Glory-beaming star! . . . Traveller, yes; it brings the day,/Promised day of Israel." The playing through of this hymn reaches its most significant moment for the symphony at the Watchman's exhortation, "Dost thou see its beauteous ray?" The several repetitions of this phrase are followed by moments during which nothing but the pervasive "Bethany" fragment is faintly heard. The fragment thus clearly assumes the extra symbolic function of the "Glory-beaming star" (in the precise meaning of the text) which brings the "promised day of Israel" — the sign of promise sought by the Traveller in the night. It is this promise of joy or hope, still distant, small, and elusive like the star, that the symphony is to bring to fulfillment in the final movement. In this context the solo cello's rendering of "In the Sweet By-and-By" (beginning in m. 5) is utterly appropriate; associatively we may recall its promise that

There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar,
For the Father waits over the way,
To prepare us a dwelling-place there.

In the sweet by-and-by
We shall meet on that beautiful shore. . . .

Moreover, the "Watchman" tune brings with it a few accessories, the most notable being the first phrase of Sir Arthur Sullivan's "Propior Deo," which appears as a counterpoint. As another setting

of the hymn text "Nearer my God to Thee . . .," its appearance here will emphasize, for those who know this verbal connection between it and "Bethany," the desired identification between "Watchman" and "Bethany"; between the promise of the former and the fulfillment—though as yet unattained and elusive—of the latter. And its opening phrase is very closely related to the opening phrase of "Bethany," which, though not explicitly stated, is nevertheless present by association with the Bethany fragment:

Ex. 5



III

Could one say that in the music of Ives there are moments when familiar fragments are incorporated, not for their uniquely particular associations, but simply as raw material woven into the fabric of the music? It is highly improbable that *none* of the extramusical associations of these fragments enters into the meaning of such a piece; in general, and at the very least, one has to insist that if the quotations are American (as they often are) some indeterminate connotation of American experience is intended or is at any rate inescapable. But it does seem to be the case that in Ives's *oeuvre* there are occasions—whole pieces or sections of pieces—when it is perhaps impossible to make associations beyond this very generalized level, or when associations are not called for. We shall return to this point later.

What is this generalized association, or web of associations? How one answers will surely vary from piece to piece. But in many works of this kind (even those where, for some quotations, more precise and particular associations are relevant), what is being symbolized seems to have much to do with the kaleidoscopic vigor of American life; with a notion that this vigor has its roots in the values of *popular* life (its communality, its fervor, its lack of sophistication, its authenticity); with an intuition that this life involves contradictions which, though at times tending towards chaos, must be affirmed before they can be transcended.

The "Hawthorne" movement from the *Concord* Sonata may

serve as an example of a piece in which the derived materials (stylistic parody as well as direct quotation) serve, *inter alia*, to connote a generalized American experience. Even without Ives's notes,⁵ we understand the movement as a kind of fantasy. It is characterized by an incessant, crazy whirling motion, which gathers into its vortex a number of familiar derived images — ragtime, blues, march style, hymn style, patriotic melody (“Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean”). These images swim in and out of view as the music renders the world fantastic, with all the transience and the capacity to transmogrify its images that so uniquely characterize fantasy. The derived images tell us that this is Concord — or rather, American — experience,⁶ but perceived through the distorting prism of a fantastic consciousness. Whether this is a child's consciousness (see Ives's notes in *Essays before a Sonata*), Hawthorne's, a drunken ragtime pianist's, a sleeper's or indeed ours seems not to matter. This remarkable movement leaves us wondering whether the (American) experience perceived through the fantastic distorting prism is real or unreal; whether what we perceive as distortion may not in fact give us a deeper, more realistic access to the truth than do the conventions of ordinary consciousness. Such a possibility is, after all, in keeping with what Santayana called the “systematic subjectivism” of (Concord) Transcendentalist thought. The derived images, then, *locate* the experience for us by stamping it as American; they also act as norms by which we can readily comprehend the distortions wreaked upon reality by the movement's own fantastic consciousness.

It seems that Ives also composed works in which it is difficult to *know* whether the quoted melodies are intended to carry any associations — or any associations beyond a generalized American character. This difficulty will not be solved until an investigation has been made of these pieces, their quotations (provenance, popular

⁵ “Hawthorne” in Ives, *Essays before a Sonata*, ed. Howard Boatwright (New York, 1961), e.g.: “The substance of Hawthorne is so dripping wet with the supernatural, the phantasmal, the mystical. . . . [This movement] is but an ‘extended fragment’ trying to suggest some of his wilder, fantastical adventures into the half-childlike, half-fairylike phantasmal realms.”

⁶ It could not, in any too literal sense, be the experience of Concord, Mass., 1840-1860 — if only because one of the prominent derived images in the movement is ragtime, which came into being in its familiar form only towards the end of the century.

usage, associated words), and the manner in which they use such borrowings. If this is so it suggests a "secret" dimension to some of the music of Ives which can be revealed only by detective work. Or rather, it implies that such a work's "secret" would be available only to an audience uniquely steeped in the musical "folklore" which provided the sources for the melodies and styles quoted, referred to, or parodied, and that such an audience could understand the significance of the uses made of those materials — the dialectic between the source materials and their new context. Whether such an audience exists today, or ever existed, is a moot point. However, insofar as the borrowed materials belong to the public domain, the "secret" of their usage by Ives is not *in principle* closed; it has the potential of opening itself in proportion to the listener's knowledge of the relevant sectors of the musical domain. Thus there is a continuum of intelligibility stretching from an "open secret" at the one extreme to a "closed secret" at the other, and for each listener any one of Ives's pieces using borrowed materials will have its place somewhere along that continuum.

For most of Ives's music of this kind, the point on the continuum designated for any work will vary from listener to listener; but there seem to be some pieces which for all listeners are near the "closed secret" end of the continuum, and it is these pieces in particular that require investigation. Such research might prove that any one piece does not belong to the continuum at all, that *no* specific associations would seem to be intended or relevant. Alternatively, investigation might unlock a "closed secret." The first alternative, however, always leaves open the possibility that any listener could bring his own private associations to the derived materials; the meaning of the piece for him would then be to some extent of his own making and would probably be different from the meaning constructed by any other listener. Such a possibility *always* exists for the music of Ives: whether Ives would have objected to that possibility or whether indeed his beliefs and his musical philosophy would actually have welcomed it are valid and important questions.

Ives's First Piano Sonata and his Second Symphony are examples of pieces on which such detective work might prove fruitful. Regarding the Second Symphony, for instance, we need to know whether or not some complex associational web of meanings is intended or relevant, stemming from the liberal use of quotations from Brahms's

Second Symphony, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Walküre*, Bach, Bruckner, Dvořák's the "New World" Symphony, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, as well as "America, the Beautiful," "Turkey in the Straw," "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," "Camptown Races," "Bringing in the Sheaves," "When I survey the Wondrous Cross," college songs, reveille, and various others.

On the other hand, there are cases where it is fairly obvious that we are not meant to infer the associations of quoted fragments — however familiar we might be with the original sources. The conclusion of the second movement ("Arguments") of Ives's String Quartet No. 2 is a case in point. At the climax of this movement, familiar themes are piled up with such rapidity that in the melee hardly anything more than instant *recognition* seems possible. In measures 90 and 91, the first and second violins quote from the third movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony; in measures 94 and 95, the violas and cellos quote a fragment of "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean"; in measures 96 and 97, the second violin quotes the beginning of the "Ode to Joy" theme; in measure 98, the first violin plays a few stressed notes of "Marching through Georgia." All but the first of these quotations is highlighted by the fact that the instruments introducing them interrupt their own rapid flow of sixteenth notes in order to play them; the sudden change in motion calls attention to the quotations in those voices. But surely the main point of this bombardment of borrowed fragments is not to create a dense interrelationship of associations, but rather to signify *incompatibility* — meaningfully so, in a movement entitled "Arguments." Each instrument is characterized to a certain extent in this movement: the second violin, for example, is rather recalcitrant, plays "andante emasculata" cadenzas, obtrudes by means of stubborn, brusque chords. The incompatibility of the quotations coincides with — is indeed an aspect of — the incompatibility of the instruments, since the quotations are played by different instruments, or different combinations of them.

IV

So far my comments have outlined the problem, adumbrated a model by means of which the principles involved in musical quotation and association might be understood, and discussed the general

question of the meaning of quoted materials in new compositional settings. It will be obvious, however, that meaning arises only in relation to a subject who constructs that meaning; it cannot therefore be taken for granted. Not only may the meaning of any piece be differently nuanced for each listener (a question of shades of interpretation), but different listeners will perceive meaning on different levels (a question of the *structure* of meaning). Three levels in this structure need now to be distinguished — each of which will, for the sake of clarity, be attributed to a different listener. Let us assume A, B, and C are listening to a piece using familiar quoted material. A concerns himself only with the “musical” relationships in the work: for him the piece is abstract. B hears the musical relationships, but he also associates with the quotations, trying to establish their relevant connotations in order to decide what they mutually “say” in terms of the relationships that exist between them and their context. He may be assisted by some form of program written by the composer; he seeks the “narrative” content of the work: for him the piece is programmatic. C hears the musical relationships, grasps the program, but knows that the meaning of the piece cannot be *reduced* to its program. Since he opens himself to the richest and fullest meaning of the work, he hears the piece “musico-philosophically.” A consideration of two of Ives’s better-known orchestral pieces will help to make these distinctions clearer and more concrete.

First, *Central Park in the Dark*. A brief description of this work in terms of our three levels of meaning would be as follows:

A. *Abstract*. The piece consists of a series of rich, flowing string harmonies, over which occur intermittent and fleeting appearances of other material — scraps of popular melody, fragments of ragtime, etc.

B. *Programmatic*. In Ives’s own words:

. . . a portrait in sound of the sounds of nature and of happenings that men would hear, sitting on a bench in Central Park on a hot summer’s night. The strings represent the night sounds and silent darkness — interrupted by the sounds from the Casino over the pond — of street singers coming up from the Circle, singing — in spots — the tunes of those days — of some “night owls” from Healey’s whistling the latest hit or the Freshman March — the occasional elevated, a street parade or a “breakdown” in the distance — of newsboys crying “uxtries,” of pianolas having ragtime war in the apartment house “over the

garden wall," a street car and a street band join in the chorus — a fire engine — a cab horse runs away, lands "over the fence, and out" — the wayfarers shout — again the darkness is heard — an echo over the pond. . . . [*Preface*]

C. *Musico-philosophical*. This level unites the others but goes beyond both. It regains contact with Level A, but negates abstract musicality in the direction of a more inclusive significance; it regains contact with Level B, but negates programmaticism by putting the narrative framework at a distance. At this level the imported fragments (e.g. ragtime) are not simply "the life of people at this hour of the night in the vicinity of the park," but are part of a new and total fabric (the composition) that wrests another meaning from them. By thus seizing, distorting, truncating the quotations, by implanting them in its own fabric, the composition uses the associations connoted by those quotations, but implies an attitude towards them: it "philosophizes" about them; more accurately, it uses those images as important building blocks, among others, in the construction of its "philosophy." At this level we think about (or rather we "feel" or "know") nature as the permanent ground of all human activities, utterly indifferent to such activities, but in a strange, paradoxical sense hospitable to them; we "know" human life as rich, deeply felt, conflictual, but in search of happiness, transient and sporadic in relation to the "empty" permanence of nature. We "know" nature as unfeeling and unconscious — in philosophical language, *in itself* — and human life as feeling and conscious — *for itself*.

"Washington's Birthday" is the same kind of piece as *Central Park* from the point of view of its musical form (Level A): in it, quiet opening and closing sections, amelodic in character and of dense shifting textures, enclose a lively central section which consists of a somewhat chaotic *mélange* of quotations from popular melodies. This quotational section is longer than the corresponding section in *Central Park*; there we never leave the darkness of the park, while here (in terms of Ives's own program — i.e. Level B) we temporarily leave the mid-winter bleakness and join "the barn dance at the Centre" — only to be returned after midnight to the "grey bleakness of the February night."⁷ The reflective Level C is

⁷ Ives's Postface to the score reads:

"'Cold and Solitude,' says Thoreau, 'are friends of mine. Now is the time before the wind rises to go forth and see the snow on the trees.'

the dialectical synthesis and surpassing of the other two. Here we might contemplate the omnipresent "winter" that encloses human existence, a winter of aloneness, emptiness, and old age; we might reflect upon the night from which we are thrust into the world and into which we again return; we might consider the notion of human community as a temporary haven offering warmth and a little refuge from the dangers that threaten it; we understand, indeed feel, the strength of this communality in its conflicts, joys, imperfections, nostalgia, and youthful vitality — the very qualities, to be sure, that give life to the central quotational section of the piece.

Obviously, the quotations of familiar themes in the central section add particularity and realism to the piece at the programmatic Level B. They conjure up a specific image of a village barn dance — not only the sound of the dance, its melodies, their inaccuracy in performance, and so forth, but also the rich fragrance of the associations that those melodies will have for (at least) most American audiences. But the meaning of these tunes is not confined to this level B. The exact way in which they are combined, confused, *musically* treated (their significance at Level A) has profound reverberations at Level C. No barn dance sounds literally as Ives has

"And there is at times a bleakness, without stir but penetrating, in a New England midwinter, which settles down grimly when the day closes over the broken-hills. In such a scene it is as though nature would but could not easily trace a certain beauty in the sombre landscape! — in the quiet but restless monotony! Would nature reflect the sternness of the Puritan's fibre or the self-sacrificing part of his ideals?

"The old folks sit 'the clean winged hearth about,
 Shut in from all the world without,
 Content to let the north wind roar
 In a baffled rage at pane and door.'

(Whittier)

"But to the younger generation, a winter holiday means action! — and down through 'Swamp hollow' and over the hill road they go, afoot or in sleighs, through the drifting snow, to the barn dance at the Centre. The village band of fiddles, fife and horn keep up an unending 'break-down' medley, and the young folks 'salute their partner and balance corners' till midnight; — as the party breaks up, the sentimental songs of those days are sung half in fun, half seriously, and with the inevitable 'adieu to the ladies' the 'social' gives way to the grey bleakness of the February night."

depicted it here: this is confusion enhanced and redoubled — a musically *composed* confusion. Were Ives's purpose merely to depict a barn dance, he could have done it more simply and with less art. What is added to the simple, literal picture, then, is *art*: an enhancement. And this enhancement does not operate simply at the programmatic level, but rather is a *musical* characteristic (Level A) which unites with the *programmatic* intention (Level B) to yield a *musico-philosophical* significance (Level C). The enhanced barn dance *signifies* "human community . . . offering warmth and a little refuge," and the other values discussed earlier. In the absence of such enhancement, the barn dance would have remained just that and nothing more; we might have *attached* these values to it, but they could not have been *signified* to our affective and intellectual understanding.

Could the musico-philosophical significance of these works have been conveyed without the use of those musical quotations? The question is important, for it is at the heart of numerous criticisms of the music of Ives. (Elliott Carter, for example, has said: "It is to me disappointing that Ives too frequently was unable and unwilling to invent musical material that expressed his own vision authentically, instead of relying on the material of others.")⁸ The precise and rigorous answer to our question must be No. Let us again use "Washington's Birthday" as an example. Inasmuch as the musico-philosophical level is a synthesis of the abstract and the programmatic levels, we could not have known *precisely* what we know now — after hearing this piece — in any other way. Another piece (or version of this piece with the quotations replaced by original abstract music in an exuberant style) might have conveyed similar feelings and expressed a related kind of awareness — but certainly not this unique synthesis of particular associations (those dance melodies) with that newly composed music; that context for the barn dance, its telling embellishments and distortions, and so forth. We could know other, even perhaps related, knowledge and feelings by different (that is, unquoted) means; but without doubt we could not know precisely *this*.

Finally, it has been claimed that Ives chose all or some of his

⁸ Vivian Perlis, ed., *Charles Ives Remembered: An Oral History* (New Haven and London, 1974), p. 145.

borrowed material for thematic and formal reasons.⁹ His sketches for the "Fourth of July," for instance, show that he was "experimenting with the contrapuntal combination of 'The Red, White and Blue' and 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic.'" This led one commentator to infer that "the melodic similarities undoubtedly influenced his decisions to combine these particular tunes."¹⁰ But one could as easily argue that Ives needed these tunes for their significance and he therefore sought for melodic similarities, possibilities of contrapuntal combination, and so on. In short, such claims cannot invalidate the possibility that when Ives used borrowed material he exploited it for his own connotative purpose. We should reckon with the likelihood that both criteria operate simultaneously—a notion that brings us back to our starting point: the analogy with the selection of symbols in dreams. For it is precisely the simultaneous operation of these criteria that governs the dreamer's choice. As Freud has shown:

If a dreamer has a choice open to him between a number of symbols, he will decide in favour of the one which is connected in its subject-matter with the rest of the material of his thoughts—which, that is to say, *has individual grounds for its acceptance in addition to the typical ones.*¹¹

⁹ See esp. Dennis Marshall, "Charles Ives's Quotations: Manner or Substance?", *Perspectives of New Music*, VI/2 (Spring-Summer, 1968), 45-56.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹¹ *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London, 1954), pp. 352-53 (my emphasis).