Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music

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1

Childhood and nostalgia in the works of Charles Ives

Bigelow and Chester mention baseball. Brewster talks of football. Whatever the sport, they all agree that Uncle Charlie played hard – so hard that little Bigelow was "frigthened [*sic*]" by him. Actually, this vivacity amused them, as evident in Bigelow's account of a madcap ride in the "old Model T," during which his uncle stopped at a treacherous spot in the road and "blew the horn real loud," explaining "I was killed here once, and that was enough for me." This same combination of intensity and eccentricity also emerges in the three brothers' discussions of their uncle's musical activities. Brewster remarks that he made them "work at music." Chester relates how Uncle Charlie played the piano "so expressively that any child would respond to it." Poor, always frightened Bigelow, however, describes how his uncle scolded him for not shouting loud enough while performing one of his songs, growling "Can't you shout better than that? That's the trouble with this country – people are afraid to shout!"[1]

Forget about shouting; Bigelow's singing, no matter how frail, was bold enough, giving voice to a significant, yet overlooked and silent, group in the musical world of "Charlie" Ives: children. But even here that group remains silent: we hear not a boy's voice but rather an adult Bigelow along with his brothers sharing their youthful impressions of their uncle. Perhaps this is as close as we will ever get to a child's view of a composer who had so much to say about children in his music and writings. Yet these recollections may be more appropriate than we think, as they parallel the composer's repeated musings on childhood, especially his own. Not surprisingly, Brewster and Bigelow, either as the objects of that nostalgia or later as nostalgic adults themselves, recognized Ives's melancholy. The former commented: "He relived his boyhood in Danbury to a degree that was quite unusual." Bigelow recalled

[1] These accounts have been drawn from the recollections of Ives's nephews in Vivian Perlis, *Charles Ives Remembered: an Oral History* (1974; rpr. New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 72–88.

how during a visit to Danbury the composer was nearly suffocated by childhood memories, leaving him to "moan": "I'm going back. You can't recall the past."[2]

Ives's efforts to "go back" and to "recall the past" have fascinated scholars, who have discussed the composer's nostalgia for a halcyon nineteenth-century small-town America, placing that desire in various contexts, such as the political and psychoanalytical.[3] Often overlooked are the representations of childhood in these nostalgic scenes, as Ives frequently embodied the past in child figures.[4] This study examines the role of childhood in the composer's works, considering how he depicted children in both music and texts and the means by which he cultivated nostalgic desire. Ives's fondness for the past and his portrayals of youth fit within a tradition of childhood nostalgia, part of a larger wave of nostalgia in American culture during the early decades of the twentieth century. Quotation became the means by which the composer participated in that cultural scene. Through that gesture, he could represent the figure of the lost child and the growing gap between past and present in which that figure was caught.

Representing childhood

Around the seventeenth century, generational fission occurred: the child and adult split apart. Before then, historical constructionists argue, the child, as we recognize the concept today, occupied no place in social or artistic spheres, being instead part of an amorphous pan-generational society.[5] After having been "invented" in the seventeenth century, the "child" slowly assumed a place, becoming a new conceptual category, separated from the "adult," itself a new classification. Of course, the

[2] Ibid., 72, 82.

[3] Discussions of nostalgia in Ives's works include James Hepokoski, "Temps perdu," *Musical Times* 135 (1994), 746–51, and Leon Botstein, "Innovation and nostalgia: Ives, Mahler, and the origins of twentieth-century modernism," in *Charles Ives and his World*, ed. J. Peter Burkholder (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 35–74. A political context for Ives's nostalgia is provided in Michael Broyles, "Charles Ives and the American democratic tradition," in *Charles Ives and his World*, 118–60. Stuart Feder discusses its psychoanalytical implications in *Charles Ives "My Father's Song": a Psychoanalytical Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). An account of the debate over nostalgic interpretation in Ives scholarship is provided below.

[4] Feder has examined Ives's "veneration of boyhood," but his discussions have centered on biographical and psychoanalytical issues, not Ives's general representations of childhood. Feder, "Charles and George Ives: the veneration of boyhood," *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 9 (1981), 265–316, and "The nostalgia of Charles Ives: an essay in affects and music," *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 10 (1982), 301–32. Both articles were incorporated into Feder, *Charles Ives "My Father's Song."*

[5] The central text in this approach is Phillipe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: a Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage, 1962).

invention of childhood has by no means been universally embraced by historians. As in the areas of gender, race, and sexuality, the constructionist approach has been challenged on several fronts. Its central point, however, remains convincing: childhood is not an intrinsic state but rather a category defined by various discourses, including education, medicine, and fashion.[6] The constructionist point of view is especially enlightening when it comes to representation of children in the arts, for it reveals not only the degree to which those depictions are culturally conditioned but also how they in turn shape cultural conceptions of childhood.

In his representations, Ives drew upon Victorian notions of childhood, particularly that of innocence.[7] Setting a text by Wordsworth, his song "The Rainbow" presents the child as a pure being from whom the Adam-like adult has strayed, but to whom he or she maintains a spiritual connection.[8] This idea of original childhood innocence emerged during the seventeenth century, was established by Rousseau, embellished by Wordsworth, and ground into clichés by the Victorian middle and upper classes. These commonplaces appear in the texts and programs of Ives's works. The song "Marie" (1898), text by Rudolf Gottshalk, describes a girl – or is it really a "flower," or some sort of sacred object?

> Marie, I see thee, fairest one, as in a garden fair;
> Before thee flowers and blossoms play, tossed by soft evening air.
> The pilgrim passing on his way bows low before thy shrine;
> Thou art, my child, like one sweet prayer: so good, so fair, so pure, almost divine!
> How sweetly now the flowrets raise their eyes to thy dear glance;
> The fairest flower on which I gaze is thy dear countenance.
> The evening bells are greeting thee with sweetest melody;
> O may no storm e'er crush thy flowers, or break thy heart, Marie![9]

[6] For a discussion of this approach and responses to it, see James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: the Erotic Child in Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 61–65; and James A. Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100–1350* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 2–9.

[7] On Victorian views of childhood, see Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, and Jackie Wullschläger, *Inventing Wonderland: the Lives and Fantasies of Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, J. M. Barrie, Kenneth Grahame, and A. A. Milne* (London: Methuen, 1995).

[8] The text is Wordsworth's "My heart leaps up." The poet's Prelude significantly shaped such views of childhood innocence. On Wordsworth's views of childhood, see Peter Coveney, *Poor Monkey: the Child in Literature* (London: Rockliff, 1957), 30–31; and Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, 63.

[9] The text was translated from the original German by Elisabeth Rücker. Ives adapted that translation. I have relied on H. Wiley Hitchcock's regularization of the punctuation. I would like to thank Professor Hitchcock for sharing with me his research on Ives's song texts from his forthcoming edition of the *129 Songs*.

How did Marie get to be so innocent? Not by her good deeds, but rather by doing nothing. Instead of being characterized by such praiseworthy traits as honesty, cheerfulness, or diligence, the innocent child was presented as a blank. Only when voided of any agency or uniqueness could a youth be truly pure. Innocence then is a state of vacancy, which, as will be discussed, is left for the adult to fill. "Marie" empties out its title character by first reducing her several times to a flower and then describing her with such hollow adjectives as "good" and "pure." As if that regalia of banality was not enough, the poor girl is raised to the level of the "almost divine." Such heavenly status further nullifies Marie, turning her into a holy relic, one of many stops on the "pilgrim's" tour of girlhood "shrines." Indeed, the protagonist views Marie more as a relic – an object locked in the distant past – than as a child, hoping that she will forever remain in the past of youth, untouched by the "storms" and heartbreaks of adulthood.

Such concepts of purity benefit the adult more than the child, who, if anything, was more burdened than edified by the inculcation of those views in school, home, and church. As Ives mentions in the notes to the "Alcotts" movement of the *Concord Sonata*, innocence formed a necessary ingredient in the American adult's diet.

> She [Louisa May Alcott] supported the family, and at the same time enriched the lives of a large part of young America, starting off many little minds with wholesome thoughts and many little hearts with wholesome emotions. She leaves memory–word pictures of healthy New England childhood days – pictures which are turned to with affection by middle-aged children – pictures that bear a sentiment, a leaven, that middle-aged America needs nowadays more than we care to admit.[10]

Ives not only doles out stock phrases of purity – "wholesome" and "healthy" – but also alludes to the construction of childhood innocence. Here, Louisa May Alcott gathers up all those empty "little minds" and fills them up with "wholesome" traits that adults "need." Fortified with such nutrients, childhood becomes something to be consumed by adults – even by the whole nation. Indeed, Ives's statement in some respects offers a more intriguing depiction of adulthood than it does of childhood. In his account, the former emerges as a default, a natural state that is ostensibly beyond construction, but is nevertheless put together just like its youthful antithesis. Placed under similar scrutiny, it also appears as an emptiness, one that fills itself ironically with the purity of childhood, thus feeding off what it originally placed in that category. This consumption both momentarily relieves that hollowness

[10] Charles Ives, *Essays before a Sonata: the Majority and Other Writings*, ed. Howard Boatwright (New York: Norton, 1970), 46–47.

and delays decay, that is, the inevitable withdrawal from the "beloved," "healthy" days of youth. As evoked by Ives, childhood and adulthood are two vacuums, the former benign and receding with the gradual ebb of youth, the latter expanding and devouring.

In Ives's works, childhood has receded into the distance. Children almost always populate the distant past, not the near present. In addition, Ives depicts youth as removed from adulthood, both physically and cognitively. Boys and girls, for instance, often meet in special events and places set aside for them, namely the various festivals evoked in many works. These meetings occur in separate realms beyond the reach and comprehension of adults. "The Children's Hour" similarly sets aside an ephemeral period ("between the dark and the daylight") of the day for its tykes, a time that remains mysterious to the musing parent.

Nostalgia

The path that leads to the remote and inscrutable realm of childhood is one of nostalgia. It is a path that Ives frequently travels in his works. Before following him on that route, it is necessary to say a few things about nostalgia in general. First, nostalgia is a concept that took many different forms throughout the twentieth century.[11] Jameson, for instance, has isolated a postmodern stripe, which, as characteristic of such films as *American Graffiti*, evokes the past through remembered styles and looks. Realized in those terms, the period exists only as a simulacrum, having no substance.[12]

Nostalgia may assume different forms but all these forms share a basic outlook on the relationship between past and present. In general, nostalgia places the past at a remove, positioning it, as Susan Stewart says, "impossibly distant in time."[13] Be it a childhood memory or a dress style, the object from the past can never be reclaimed, never experienced as it once was. Nostalgia peers at that remote time from an uncertain and unfulfilling present. The stresses and needs of that period impel a search for stability and fulfillment, which the nostalgic believes can be found in the past. That search leads to a roseate past created in the present, such as Ives's idyllic small-town nineteenth-century America.

If various forms of nostalgia converge around unease with the present and an idealization and distancing of the past, they part ways over the

[11] A similar point is made in Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase, "The dimensions of the past," in Shaw and Chase, eds., *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 2.

[12] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 18–21.

[13] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, and the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 140.

feeling of loss experienced for the latter period. By placing the past at such an unreachable distance, nostalgia recognizes that the past cannot be reclaimed. However, it is the degree to which that loss is felt that separates different strands of the sensation. Jameson's postmodern nostalgia does not lament the irrecoverability of the past. As in a film or magazine spread, it glosses over such feelings by sealing both present and past in the smooth finish of the photographic surface. After all, it is impossible to mourn a simulacrum. Other nostalgic works, especially those tending to childhood, wince at the realization that the past cannot be held. The works by Ives and others discussed in this chapter acutely feel this sense of separation. They not only emerge from the divide between past and present but they also widen it. Each concludes with a gesture that heaves the past further away, leaving us in a present more bereft of the essence we sought to find in the past.

This sense of loss accords with earlier conceptions of nostalgia. Nostalgia first appeared as a physical disease, one codified in 1688 by the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer. He cobbled together the name for this new ailment from the ancient Greek terms *nostos* (return to home) and *algos* (suffering). As the neologism conveys, nostalgia amounted to a virulent form of homesickness, which resulted in lethargy, wasting, and even suicide.[14] Around the turn of the nineteenth century, nostalgia metamorphosed from a physical condition to the emotional one recognized today.[15] Instead of home, the nostalgic now looked to the past, a realm that swelled well beyond the borders of a village and encompassed broader feelings and states, as seen in the yearning for the lightness of childhood days. Such emotions covered a full range, from dabs of wistfulness to depths of loss.

It is those depths that occupy this discussion. The works of Ives and other artists presented here all cave into loss. The model of nostalgia developed below pertains to such mournful works; however, many of the general points relate to other forms of nostalgia as well, from Hofer's malady to Jameson's postmodern simulacra. One of the first things to remark about nostalgia is that it courts paradox. It sustains itself by suspending opposites, particularly past and present. In this state, the two periods press up so close to each other that they begin to take on characteristics of one another. Nostalgia emerges from a loss of the past – for Ives, of his youth. Triggered by that absence, it seeks to mend the loss by giving the past a sense of immediacy, creating the impression that one

[14] On the medical notion of nostalgia, see George Rosen, "Nostalgia: a forgotten psychological disorder," *Clio Medica* 10/1 (1975), 28–51; and Roderick Peters, "Reflections on the origin and aim of nostalgia," *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 30 (1985), 135–48.

[15] For different views of this transformation, see Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 8–18; and Nicholas Dames, "Austen's nostalgics," *Representations* 73 (2001), 117–43.

has recovered it and is living it anew.[16] Such temporal contradictions occur in the programs and texts of Ives's compositions, which often turn back the clock and then relate the past with the spontaneity of the present tense. With the past so lively, the present now appears still and far off – in other words, like the past. That period, however, never disappears, making itself felt in the desires and anxieties of the moment that inspire the backward glance. For instance, Ives's remembrance of "healthy New England childhood days" speaks of both personal and national malaise, which "middle-aged America" does not "care to admit."

These temporal chimeras (past and present appearing simultaneously as themselves and each other) create other paradoxes. Nostalgia, as Stewart argues, gives the impression of the past being at once intimate and distant as well as restored and lost.[17] The illusion of intimacy and restoration allure the nostalgic, pushing him or her further into paradox. As Vladimir Jankélévitch describes, that state can grow so deep as to leave the nostalgic disoriented, being at once here and there, conscious of both past and present.[18] Nostalgia, though, ultimately dissipates such ambiguity. Some works by Ives conclude with a sudden imposition of the present, an appearance that restores the listener to the "here" not to the "there." Nostalgia may float illusions of intimacy but it prefaces and closes them with statements of loss.

While plunged in those fantasies, the nostalgic has seemingly found bliss, believing him- or herself to be reconnected with the past. Those illusions, though, are far from peaceful. Nostalgia, as Jankélévitch argues, is a "restless" state.[19] The nostalgic is a driven figure, driven by the evasiveness of the past. The intimacy that he or she finds quickly fades, prompting yet another reach at that removed period. Recollection begets recollection. Each reminiscence attempts to reach the horizon of the past. Falling so woefully short, the nostalgic pushes on through another memory and gets no closer. Just as quixotic, he or she strives to complete the incomplete past.[20] Memories provide only a residue of the past, an insufficiency that leaves the nostalgic grasping for more in the hope that these traces may stick together and form something substantial. This restlessness can be heard in many Ives pieces. Collage compositions like *The Fourth of July* busily pile quotations on top of each other as if to build a stable shelter for the past. The frenetic construction only creates more instability, which inspires the throwing down of even more quotations and the escalation of chaos, all of which leads to the memory-edifice collapsing in the final measures. The past is more fragmentary at the end of such works than at the beginning.

[16] Stewart, *On Longing*, 23–24. [17] Ibid., 20, 139.
[18] Vladimir Jankélévitch, *L'irréversible et la nostalgie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), 281.
[19] Ibid., 281. [20] Ibid., 302–03.

What makes the nostalgic so restless is that the object of desire is not only out of reach but also vague. Nostalgia strives to return to a point of origins, an amorphous time that is never clearly known and cannot be recalled with any precision, let alone reached. Childhood is such a time, especially as depicted by Ives. In his works and writings, it amounts to either an inaccessible and ultimately unknowable state or a grand emptiness, which we fill with our own thoughts. To return to childhood then would not entail a return to days of picnics – it would instead amount to a fall into ambiguity and nothingness. Some of Ives's compositions sense as much, as they conclude with either open questions (the third movement of the Fourth Violin Sonata) or death ("Tom Sails Away").

If nostalgia does have an object it is not a specific site in the past. As Jankélévitch tells us, "the object of nostalgia is not such and such a place, but rather the reality of the past, in other words, pastness."[21] For pastness to exist, there must be a distance between past and present. Forever caught in paradoxes, the nostalgic wants to close that gap but at the same time he or she realizes that it must remain open. That gap is the space of nostalgia, without which the sensation could never exist. It must always have a far-away point at which to peer and an unsettled present from which to do so. Above all, nostalgia exists as a longing, and, with its object forever unattainable, it becomes in many ways a longing for a longing, a feeling that feeds upon its own desire.[22] Instead of proving embittered, the desire for the past can stir pleasure. To novelist Willa Cather (one of the nostalgics discussed below), nostalgia is a "melancholy pleasure" to be frequently indulged.[23] In yet another blending of opposites, it is a pleasure tinged with remorse, or, seen the other way around, remorse that has forked into pleasure. To preserve that pleasure the gap between past and present must never close.[24] Only when it is open can the nostalgic settle into the illusion of, as Cather put it, the past being brought back "so vividly into the living world for a moment" – but only for a moment.[25]

The music of childhood

Ives employed a range of musical gestures and idioms to evoke childhood. The first to come to mind is the composer's celebrated use of quotation. The compositions containing quotations in many ways

[21] Ibid., 290.
[22] Stewart, *On Longing*, 145, and Jankélévitch, *L'irréversible et la nostalgie*, 292.
[23] Willa Cather, *Lucy Gayheart*, in Sharon O'Brien, ed., *Later Novels* (New York: Library of America, 1990), 764.
[24] Stewart, *On Longing*, 145. [25] Cather, *Lucy Gayheart*, 772.

resemble scrapbooks, with the tune fragments as clipped mementos.[26] Ives pressed into his book mostly memories from his youth, many of the quoted melodies bearing childhood associations. This analogy captures the nostalgia surrounding the composer's quotations, as the souvenir collector derives pleasure from relating the surviving object to an original period or event, a connection involving the nostalgic negotiation of past and present.[27]

Quoted melodies invite a similar effort, as the listener links them with the past from which they come. Ever the nostalgic, Ives was not content with that simple affair. He did not merely borrow past tunes but distorted them.[28] Such treatment heightens nostalgia by doubling the distance between a melody and its origins, since to the chronological gap between a quotation and its period of currency there is added a musical one between the transformed and original versions. This expansion suggests something so removed that it cannot be reached, a melancholic assurance to the nostalgic. In Ives's case, that something is the referent of many of his quoted tunes: childhood.

As if distortion did not make the past distant enough, Ives availed himself of other gestures, including his incantational style. That idiom appears in slow passages, usually introductions, and is characterized by metrical stasis, rich dissonant chords, and melodic and harmonic repetition (Ex. 1.1 presents such a passage from "Tom Sails Away"). This feeling of suspension combined with repetition hints at an incantation, a suggestion strengthened by the texts of these passages. The opening of "Old Home Day," for instance, floats the enigmatic spell-like phrase "Go my songs! Draw Daphnis from the city," whereas that in "Down East" conjures "visions of my homeland." The incantations in both songs summon up childhood memories, including boys playing games and "schooldays." As these sections describe, however, such recollections remain elusive, barely coalescing into "scenes" and "visions."[29]

By the end of most childhood pieces, those scenes and visions disperse. These works end with incisive moments of disruption, sudden breaks from the preceding music. The ruptures take various forms, including the sudden harmonic shift in the last measures of "The Things

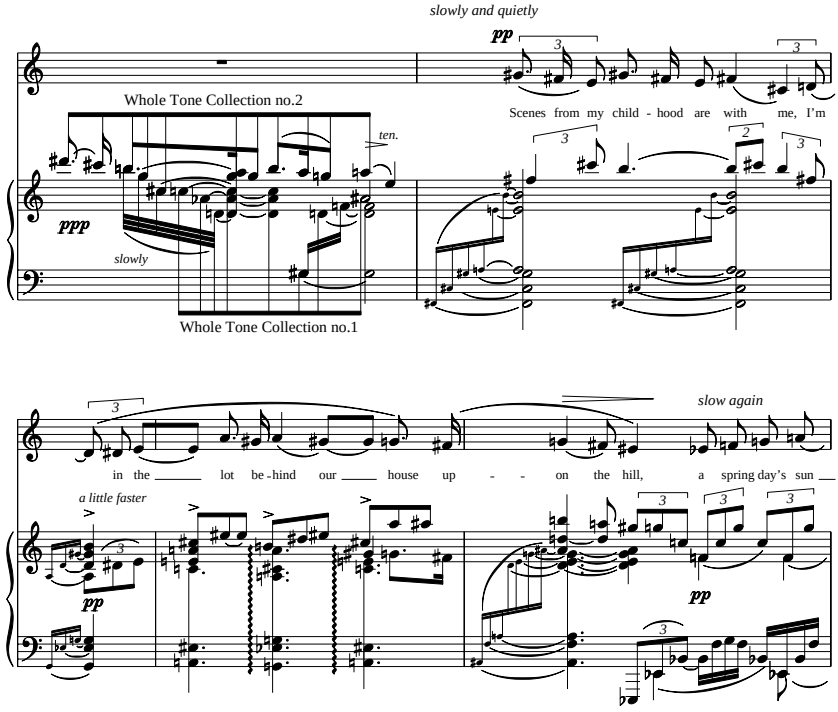
[26] Lloyd Whitesell also uses the scrapbook analogy in his discussion of "The Things our Fathers Loved," in "Reckless form, uncertain audiences: responding to Ives," *American Music* 12 (1994), 308–09.

[27] Stewart, *On Longing*, 145.

[28] For a discussion of this distortion, see Robert P. Morgan, "Ives and Mahler: mutual responses at the end of an era," *19th Century Music* 2 (1978), 72–81; and Lawrence Kramer, *Music and Poetry: the Nineteenth Century and After* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 177–78.

[29] Feder has also singled out these passages. In discussions of the two songs, he hints at elements of incantation, referring to the "impressionistic spell-weaving musical texture that whispers, 'Now we are going back.'" Feder, *Charles Ives "My Father's Song,"* 314.

Ex. 1.1 Ives, "Tom Sails Away," mm. 1–4



our Fathers Loved," the violent explosion in *The Fourth of July*, and the vague, inconclusive ending of the Fourth Violin Sonata.[30] Whatever the guise assumed, these breaks serve a similar function: they throw us out of a childhood past made to sound revived and intimate and back into an adult present which comes across as cold and hollow.[31] We are left with a feeling of loss, deprived of even the illusion of childhood.[32]

[30] In his discussion of nostalgia, Hepokoski describes a general pattern of "*telos* peaks and decay," in which the work builds up to a "climactic or revelatory *telos*" involving the statement of a quotation and then quickly subsides into a "diminuendo fade-out." Those softer concluding passages, according to him, evoke the loss of childhood. He does not concentrate on the disruptions that precede those passages. Burkholder has questioned Hepokoski's interpretation, pointing out that the "fade-out" is a gesture that occurs in a wide variety of contexts, and not just childhood nostalgia pieces. Hepokoski, "Temps perdu," 746–51; and J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 469, n. 70.

[31] This gesture is not limited to nostalgic pieces. It occurs in works focusing on some moments of introspection (like the nostalgic reflection on the past) and serves as a means of breaking the contemplative spell. Such a use of the gesture occurs in *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*.

[32] Not all recollections of childhood end in this fashion. There are exceptions. "Old Home Day" winds up with a rousing march. The second movement of the Third Symphony, entitled "Children's Day," ends conventionally with a gradual diminuendo and *ritard*.

Within these frames of incantation and disruption, boys and girls often appear as sites of boundless energy, a vigor that keeps them one step ahead of adults, thus making them even more removed. Ives captures this dynamism with what can be labeled his rambunctious style. Such early works as "Memories (A)" and "The Circus Band" depicting youthful vitality simply incorporate up-tempo genres like marches. As Ives grew further away from youth, however, children ran faster away from him. The Fourth Violin Sonata, of which the program for the first movement describes children out-maneuvering adults, and other later compositions not only rely on fast tempos but also feature accelerandos, syncopations, metric displacements, and different rhythmic strata, which combine to create a feeling of volatility.[33] Ives underscores these representations of kinetic youth by depicting adulthood as static. In "The Cage," a boy "wonders" if "life" (his adult future) will resemble the pacing trapped tiger, evoked by an aimless ostinato. "The See'r" presents us with a different type of caged animal, the commonplace "old man" sitting on Main Street, whose tedium Ives mocks with the inane repetition of the last line, "a-going by."

Two scenes from childhood

Having discussed childhood and nostalgia in general terms, this chapter will now look at what shapes they take in two works by Ives: "Tom Sails Away" and the Fourth Violin Sonata. The discussion of these pieces examines how the composer's handling of quotation shapes cultural conceptions of childhood. That line of inquiry overlaps with an account of how nostalgia is cultivated in these compositions, particularly the ways in which quotations arrange the relationship between past and present.

Before turning to these compositions, a few more words about nostalgia are in order. That topic has proven to be a disputed one in Ives studies. On one side, Larry Starr has warned against "the widespread misconception of Ives as a nostalgic composer."[34] Concluding his discussion of the song "The Things our Fathers Loved," Burkholder remarks "this is not an exercise in nostalgia for the songs and scenes of the past."[35] Stuart

[33] In his discussion of Ives's "up-tempo" movements, Lawrence Kramer also connects the "exuberant, antinomian musical energy" of those sections with "memories of [Ives's] boyhood." Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 188.

[34] Larry Starr, *A Union of Diversities: Style in the Music of Charles Ives* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1992), 58.

[35] Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 311. Burkholder cites Joseph W. Reed's study of Ives, which makes a similar point; Reed, *Three American Originals: John Ford, William Faulkner, and Charles Ives* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), 54–55. In a private

Feder, on the other hand, has called that song "Ives's most concentrated work of nostalgia" and has based much of his psychoanalytical study of the composer on the attempts to reconnect with the past.[36] Along these lines, James Hepokoski has placed Ives in a Proustian light, seeing the New Englander entranced by "temps perdu."[37]

This debate turns on the question of whether Ives's memory pieces extol the past or mourn it.[38] Starr and Burkholder claim that the composer prizes the past as a trove of values that need to be, and can be, reclaimed by listeners.[39] "The Things our Fathers Loved," to go back to that contentious song, are all "things" – the simplicity of small-town life and patriotism – that can still be grasped. This interpretation holds up half of the nostalgic equation, that of a troubled present looking to the past for stability, but rejects the crucial second part, the inaccessibility of that period. Feder and Hepokoski, in contrast, embrace both halves, even going so far as to emphasize the surrender to loss. Both center that loss around childhood. The latter sees Ives seeking the "motive of lost wholeness," the key to putting back together the world of youth, no matter how fleetingly.[40]

Befitting such a paradoxical state, nostalgia can be seen as encompassing, and to a degree reconciling, both interpretations. Hepokoski suggests as much, claiming that the "optimistic reading" and the melancholic one can "co-exist contradictorily" with each other.[41] There, however, may not be such a big contradiction. The works can gratify both interpretations, but only up to a point. Ives's music does rally around the beliefs of the past. But it goes beyond mere campaigning by having us feel the richness of those values. We are led into scenes in which the past and its values seem very much alive, an impression created by the use of the present tense and fast tempos. That illusion can only last so long before the rekindled past gives way to a spent one. The disruption of the fantasy does not completely cut us off from treasured principles of previous times. The sense of loss created at the end of these works

correspondence, Burkholder elaborated upon his position, stating that nostalgia does run through some Ives works but "that not all of Ives's visitations of the past are nostalgic." Private correspondence with author, 24 December 2001.

[36] Feder, *Charles Ives "My Father's Song,"* 253. [37] Hepokoski, "Temps perdu," 746.

[38] Another important issue surrounding nostalgia is the apparent tension between that sensation and the modernist bearings of Ives's styles. Nostalgia has often been conveyed as a reaction against progress and the march of time. Ives has used it that way, as a protest against developments in modern society. On the other hand, he saw no tension between modernist idioms and the desire for the past. Indeed, the latter served him as a way of evoking the multifaceted scenes of the past and the tensions within his yearning for it. A similar point is made in Hepokoski, "Temps perdu," 751 and Botstein, "Innovation and nostalgia," 35–74.

[39] Starr, *Union of Diversities*, 58–69; and Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 311.

[40] Hepokoski, "Temps perdu," 751. [41] Ibid.

makes us feel even more urgently the need for those ideals, giving them life through their absence rather than their presence. We are left with the hope that they can be revived, one more shade of nostalgic wistfulness.[42]

The two works discussed below reveal different scenes of nostalgia. Each draws upon some or all of Ives's nostalgia gestures – quotation, disjunction, incantation, the illusion of a revived past – but employs them in distinct ways and to contrasting effects.[43] In a broader scheme, these pieces offer different approaches to memory. For Ives, memory and nostalgia are not one and the same. Not all of the works that turn back to the past get caught up in the paradoxes of nostalgia. Quite the contrary, memory takes a wide range of forms in Ives's music, as reflected in the unprecedented rich repertory of borrowing practices that he cultivated in part to pursue the past.[44] Ives can be seen as participating in a larger modernist fascination with memory, one shaped by such artists and thinkers as Proust, Freud, and Schoenberg, among others.[45] Their probing of reminiscence focuses on such questions as what is memory and how does it work. Each of Ives's memory pieces offers a unique solution to these questions, creating contrasting representations of the act of memory and the sensations it produces.

Some compositions find a solution through nostalgia. Having said that, it would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that there are a circumscribed group of nostalgia pieces and defined criteria by which to identify them. The richness of Ivesian reminiscence confounds such firm categorization. Moreover, given how Ives's pieces generally position the past as distant (compared to the oppressively near and malignant past in Freudian repression schemes), it could be argued that his recollections (like Proust's) have a nostalgic cast to them. In some works, though, that sensation is especially concentrated. Creating that concentration are a feeling of loss, a wide rift between past and present, and the distance

[42] Another view of nostalgia should be mentioned here. Stuart Tannock has described a nostalgia that builds "continuity" with the past, links that can be used to enrich the present. He acknowledges that "discontinuity" is also a key element of nostalgia; however, as he weighs the elements of continuity and discontinuity, it is the former that is "over and above" the latter. That perspective clashes with the model developed here. Tannock, "Nostalgia critique," *Cultural Studies* 9 (1995), 456. Another study to take this position is Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville, VA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

[43] These devices of course appear in other contexts than childhood nostalgia; however, Ives most often employed them to convey that desire, using them all together or just a few at a time.

[44] Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 1–7.

[45] For a discussion of approaches to memory that emerged after the French Revolution and developed through the early modernist period (including the works of Proust and Freud), see Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).

of the remembered object. When all three of these related elements are combined, the rueful glow of nostalgia is at its richest.[46]

"Tom Sails Away"

The song "Tom Sails Away" (1917) unfolds a triptych of nostalgia: the first panel offers an incantation passage, the second depicts childhood events and characters, and the third reveals a present clouded by war. That closing gloom inspired the work, which Ives placed in a set of three *Songs of the War* written in response to the American entry into World War I.[47] "Tom" ostensibly comments on the sacrifices and patriotism required by the war, yet the song dwells on images of childhood, not battle. Once again nostalgia offers refuge from a troubling present.[48] So in that dark year of 1917, Ives presents us not with trenches but with "lettuce rows" from a childhood garden. War makes one vague appearance, hanging over the day that Tom leaves for "over there."[49]

> Scenes from my childhood are with me,
> I'm in the lot behind our house up on the hill,
> a spring day's sun is setting,
> Mother with Tom in her arms is coming towards the garden;
> The lettuce rows are showing green.
> Thinner grows the smoke o'er the town,
> stronger comes the breeze from the ridge,
> 'Tis after six, the whistles have blown,
> the milk train's gone down the valley.
> Daddy is coming up the hill from the mill,
> We run down the lane to meet him.
> But today! Today Tom sailed away for, for over there, over there, over there!
> Scenes from my childhood are floating before my eyes.[50]

[46] It should be mentioned that there are some works depicting childhood that do not embrace this sensation. For example, "Old Home Day," with its driving march, never stops for the melancholic reflection of nostalgia.

[47] For a discussion of how the songs relate to the war, see Alan Houtchens and Janis P. Stout, " 'Scarce heard amidst the guns below': intertextuality and meaning in Charles Ives's war songs," *Journal of Musicology* 15 (1997), 80–84.

[48] Nancy Martha West has discussed how Kodak advertisements emphasized nostalgic scenes during the War; West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, 187–99.

[49] Larry Starr offers an analysis of "Tom Sails Away" in his discussion of Ives's treatment of memory; Starr, *Union of Diversities*, 71–78.

[50] This is the text that appeared in the later *Nineteen Songs* edition (1935). In the original text of the *114 Songs*, the penultimate line reads "But today! In freedom's cause Tom sailed away for over there, over there, over there." The change for the later edition, as mentioned below, serves to call attention to the move from past recollection to the present.

The piece opens with the nostalgic set piece of the protagonist – and the listener – situated in the present and looking back to the past. Typical of Ives, his nostalgia goes beyond convention, as the protagonist does not merely recall the past but attempts to bring it to life through an incantation. A mysterious spell-like atmosphere hangs over the opening two measures, created by the slow tempo, soft dynamics, and, most of all, the use of whole-tone scales (Ex. 1.1). In the first measure, both whole-tone collections appear, but it is collection no. 2 (C♯, D♯, etc.) that stands out, as it sounds in the upper melodic line (d♯–c♯–b–a–g). The bead of that line, the repeated b–a–g figure, reappears in the voice part a measure later (transposed down a minor third), suggesting that it is an important part of the spell. It is.

The melodic phrase comes from "The Old Oaken Bucket," a song that unites Samuel Woodworth's 1817 poem with the air "Araby's Daughter" from the British composer George Kiallmark's adaptation of Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1822) (Ex. 1.2).[51] The original text and later vocal setting typify the large body of nineteenth-century verse and songs that indulge in childhood nostalgia, either reflecting on those bygone days or in some cases expressing the wish to turn back into a child.[52] "The Old Oaken Bucket" achieved an unrivaled popularity in this genre. After the first known printing in 1843, it was frequently published, dominating music catalogs during the 1880s, the period of Ives's childhood.[53]

Ives quotes both the melody and text ("scenes [of] my childhood") of the song in the incantation passage.[54] Even with those two elements, "The Old Oaken Bucket" remains shrouded, obscured largely by the harmonic context. In the first measure, the melody hovers above the two whole-tone collections, while in the second, it sits atop a fifths-based chord. A closer look at the latter reveals it to comprise the first six notes of the E major scale, the tonic of "The Old Oaken Bucket" quotation. The slide from a whole-tone to a diatonic area would be expected to distill some clarity to the borrowing, but it does not. The ascending-fifths presentation of the E major pitches clouds the sense of that key, and, with it, the origins of the melody. Here and throughout "Tom," "The Old Oaken Bucket" dangles in the background. Nonetheless, the one-hundred-year vintage of the song and the focus on

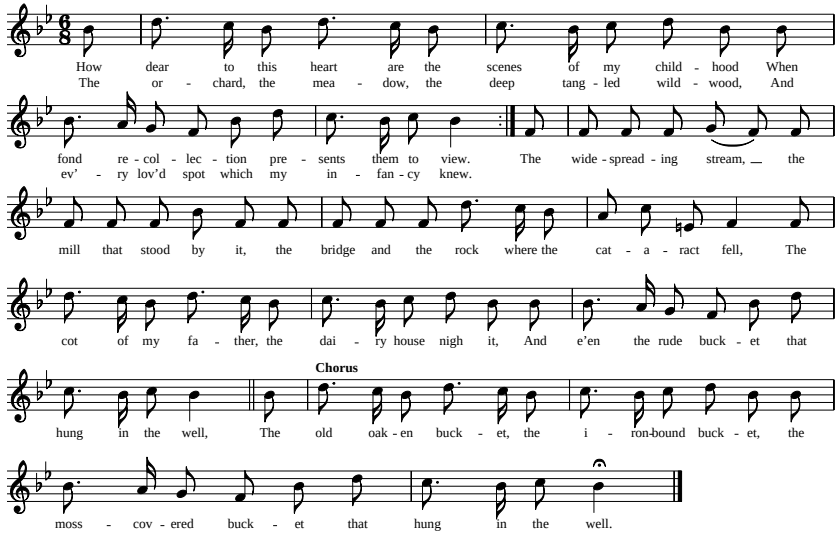
[51] For a discussion of the sources and publication history of the song, see Josephine L. Hughes and Richard J. Wolfe, "The tunes of 'The Bucket'," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 65 (1961), 555–69; and James J. Fuld, *The Book of World-Famous Music: Classical, Popular, and Folk* (3rd edn; New York: Dover, 1985), 413–14.

[52] Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, 67.

[53] Fuld, *The Book of World-Famous Music*, 413; and Hughes and Wolfe, "The tunes of 'The Bucket'," 564.

[54] He quotes the two separately, not the text with the melody that it appears with in the song. This disjunction may suggest the fragmentation of the past.

Ex. 1.2 Woodworth and Kiallmark, "The Old Oaken Bucket"



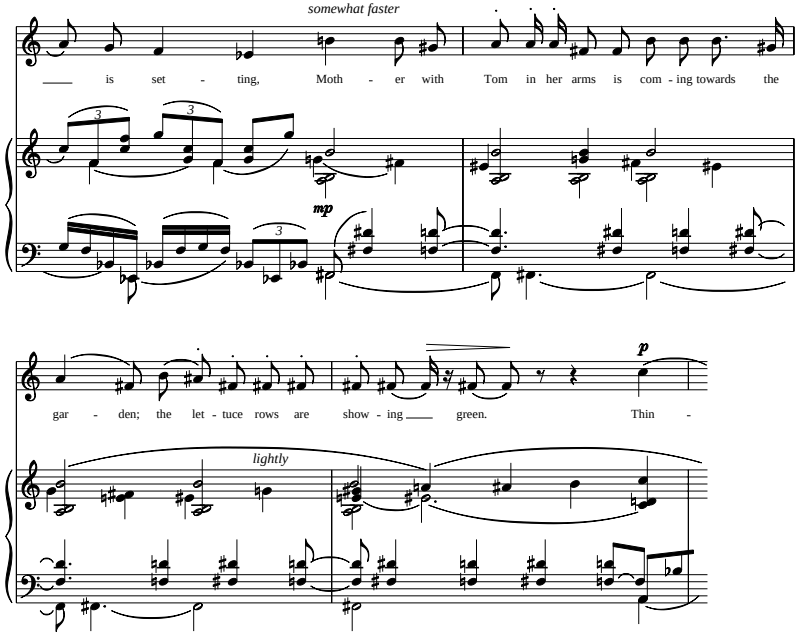
That moss-covered bucket I hailed as a treasure,
For often at noon, when returned from the field.
I found it a source of an exquisite pleasure,
The purest and sweetest that nature can yield.
How ardent I seized it, with hands that were glowing,
And quick to the white pebbled bottom it fell.
Then soon, with the emblem of truth overflowing,
And dripping with coolness, it rose from the well.
Chorus:

How sweet from the green, mossy brim to receive it,
As poised on the curb it inclined to my lips!
Not a full blushing goblet could tempt me to leave it,
Tho' filled with the nectar that Jupiter sips.
And now, far removed from the loved habitation,
The tear of regret will intrusively swell,
As fancy reverts to my father's plantation,
And sighs for the bucket that hung in the well.
Chorus:

remembering youth combine to make it a potent ingredient in Ives's spell.

The spell works immediately as we find ourselves in a youthful scene brought to life through the use of the present tense ("I'm in the lot behind our house up on the hill"). The movement from present to past eases by, compared to the abrupt disruptions that throw us in the opposite direction at the end of a work. The flow of this transition is enhanced by having elements of the incantation warp and fade away as we slide into the past. The rolled fifth-based chords in the piano lead to a progression of similarly-played dissonant collections, containing no fifths, that ascend by whole and half steps from f♯ to a♯. Apparently, one moves upward to go back in time, at least in Ives's works. Considering that ascending chromatic motion has traditionally created a sense of propulsion, that gesture is appropriate, for it makes the past seem all the more alive. In the vocal part, chips of "The Old Oaken Bucket" dissolve. Brief dotted rhythms lilt in the voice, and the chief melodic phrase splinters, broken apart and now descending chromatically instead of by step (g♯–f♯–e–g♯–f♯–e becomes g–f♯–g–f♯–e♯).

Ex. 1.3 Ives, "Tom Sails Away," mm. 5–8



With the next phrase ("a spring day's sun is setting"), "The Old Oaken Bucket" material has largely disappeared.[55] There is no longer a need for it, as the past has apparently been revived. The text mounts a series of brief individual scenes, each of which receives a distinct setting, distinguished by the use of whole-tone, pentatonic, diatonic, and chromatic collections (or combinations thereof). Within this sequence, the image of "mother" holding the infant Tom in her arms stands out (see Ex. 1.3). The voice cradles this mother–son image with a simple melody appropriate for a nursery-rhyme song. True to character, the melody is tonal, in E major (the key of "The Old Oaken Bucket"); however, the accompaniment, again as in "The Old Oaken Bucket" incantation, dims that key, though not nearly to the same degree. The piano underpins the melody with a dominant-seventh chord, but that chord chromatically wavers, alternating between itself and a diminished triad with a major seventh

[55] As pointed out below, fragments of the tune do appear here and there. Wayne Shirley has suggested to me that the opening measures also include a quotation of "Deep River," an appropriate allusion given the equation of death and crossing a body of water in both songs. John Kirkpatrick has also remarked on the possible quotation of "Deep River." Kirkpatrick, *A Temporary Mimeographed Catalogue of the Music Manuscripts and Related Materials of Charles Edward Ives, 1874–1954* (1960; rpr. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 201.

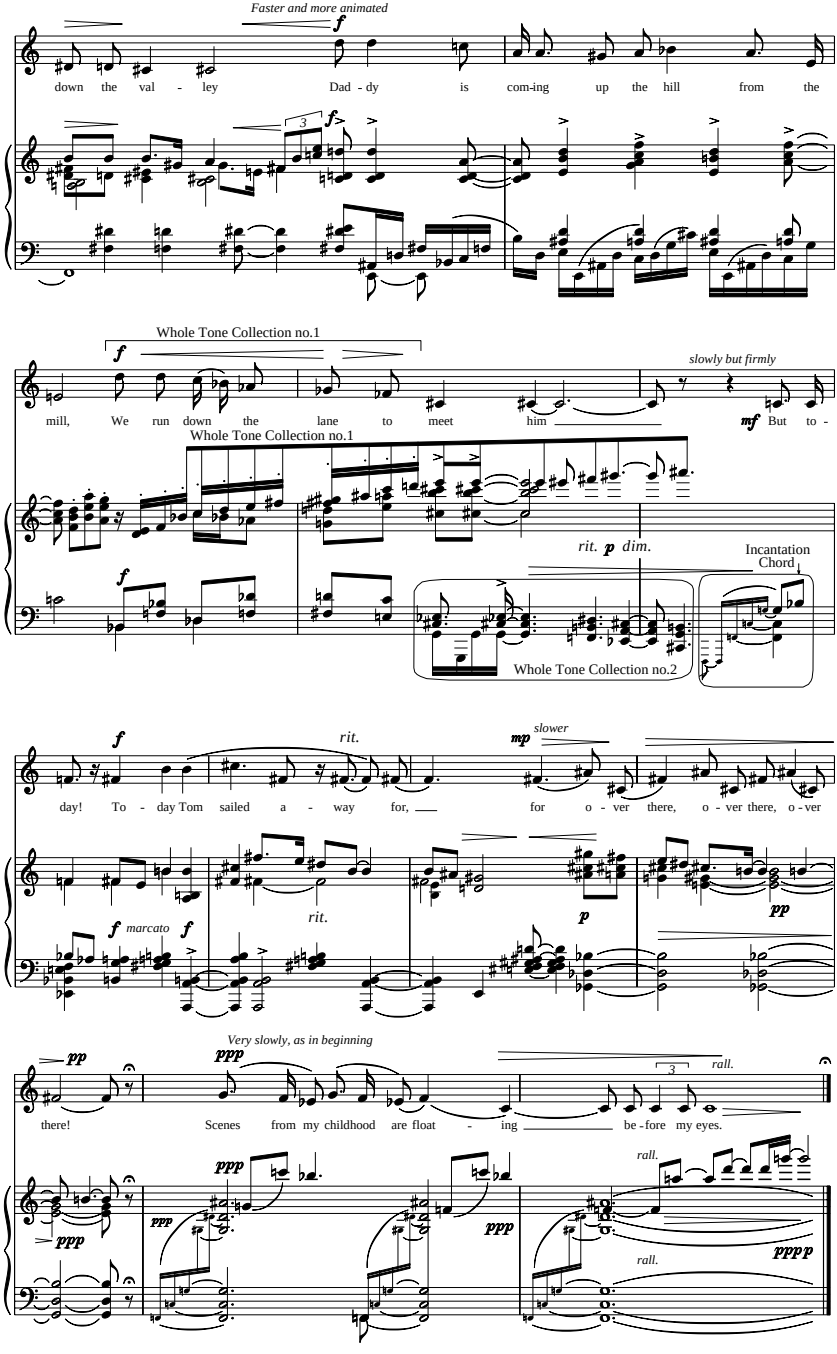
(b–d–f–a). The regular alternation of those two chords is enhanced by the steady swaying of f♯ and b/a pedals. The whole phrase returns in mm. 14–15, this time stated completely in the piano while the voice follows the "milk train" down the hill with a new descending melody.

By this time, we have been caught up in a rush of youthful scenes, which, through the use of accelerandos and an increasingly active accompaniment, have grown "more animated." The song moves from what initially appears to be a narration of the past in present tense to a feeling that the described events are occurring in the present. This increased agitation culminates with the children "running" into the arms of "Daddy." That paternal scene strongly suggests that the protagonist is an Ives surrogate, as the composer often attempted to connect with his father (George) in his childhood narratives. As such the episode makes a fitting climax for the song, in terms of both the musical and the nostalgic dramas at play. The phrase (Ex. 1.4, mm. 15–19) begins with one last accelerando and pushes into the highest and lowest ranges reached by the keyboard. In addition, it concludes with a simultaneous statement of both whole-tone collections, a confluence that gives chromatic completion.

At this point, the nostalgic fantasy nears culmination. No sooner has "Daddy" stepped into the song than the past disappears, eclipsed by the arrival of "today." "But today! Today" the protagonist reiterates so as to make clear the arrival of the present. The accompaniment has already announced that arrival, signaling it with a disruption, the surprise appearance of the fifth-based rolled chord from the incantation (see Ex. 1.4). That chord, though, has sunk down a half step from its first appearance (from an f♯ to an f♮ root). Whereas ascending chromatic motion leads back into the past, descending movement pushes forward into the present.

The gap between past and present has reopened but we have not yet completely crossed over into the latter, instead we are caught between the two periods, part of that limbo – here and there – state that Jankélévitch sees as so characteristic of nostalgia. Ives commemorates the day of Tom's departure with two quotations: one from the past ("Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" in both piano and voice) and one from 1917 (George M. Cohan's "Over There"). The former may seem at first not to be an object of nostalgia but rather one of the reclaimed past values upheld by some Ives scholars, a patriotic call that is needed in the present. "Columbia" does indeed rouse the present, but it ultimately belongs to the past. Typical of Ives's nostalgia, it remains a fragment. The melodic line in the piano never reaches the final note of the borrowed phrase, left tattered and incomplete like the past. In contrast, the song from the present, "Over There," stays intact (at least the phrase quoted by Ives), being firmly part of "today."

Ex. 1.4 Ives, "Tom Sails Away," mm. 15–26



Another facet of "today" is the return of the opening incantation passage that concludes the song (see Ex. 1.4). That reprise is a unique case in Ives's oeuvre. Once having worked their magic, those spells do not return. Instead of taking us back into the past, the passage now serves to push us further into the present. The conclusion provides a compelling example of how Ives enlarges the gulf between the two periods, as he takes two steps away from the past. The song first moves into a national present, a time when the country must unite in fighting for "freedom's cause." It then strides further ahead into a personal present, the protagonist looking back at the past. That time has moved on, even from the present at the beginning of the piece, is suggested by the transposition of the incantation passage down a half-step, a transposition already heard with the appearance of the rolled chord that proclaimed the arrival of "today." Ives emphasizes the transposition by moving from g♭ to f♮ in the bass (mm. 24–25). Through this second step into the present, the ending deepens what Cather called the "melancholy pleasure" of nostalgia. The protagonist sits in the present mulling over "The Old Oaken Bucket," a treasured tune about childhood memories, and looking back at his own past, which is now even more distant.

The presence of "The Old Oaken Bucket" extends beyond the opening and closing passages, as "Tom" draws additional material from it. Like the older piece, Ives's work moves from the initial instance of recollection to the desired childhood scenes, which in both songs feature outdoor sketches and a father. The two also link childhood with an object that is remembered but cannot be retrieved. In "The Old Oaken Bucket," the "rude bucket" represents youth, whereas, in Ives's piece, Tom, perhaps headed toward his death overseas, embodies the protagonist's vanquished childhood. Both songs muse upon the objects. The chorus of the older one longingly refers over and over to the bucket. In "Tom," the cut-short youth of the title character underlies the melancholic repetition of "over there" with its echoes of "Taps," notably different from the original spirited refrain in Cohan's original, a contrast suggesting Tom's impending death.

The two works conclude by returning to the present. "Far removed from the loved [plantation]," Woodworth's protagonist "sighs" over lost childhood days. The song, however, cushions this blow by concluding with the chorus, which points the listener back to the past and gives the impression that the bucket and the youth it represents are just within reach. Ives, however, is not so comforting. "Tom" ends with a reprise of the opening incantation section, leaving its listener in a troubling present. The abrupt turn from the symbolic childhood object to the adult protagonist and his recollections heightens the sense of distance and loss and, by doing so, surpasses the already high level of nostalgia in "The Old Oaken Bucket."