THE ENGLISH MUSICAL RENAISSANCE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON GERALD FINZI: AN IN DEPTH STUDY OF *TILL EARTH OUTWEARS*, OP. 19a

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by

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ABSTRACT

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By Sean Patrick Lair, B.M., B.A.

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956) was an early Twentieth Century, British composer, whose talent is most notable in the realm of art song. Seeing as his works so perfectly suit my voice, I have decided to sing a song set of his on my senior recital, entitled Till Earth Outwears, Op. 19a. Through research, I wish to better inform my performance, and the future ones of others, by better acquainting myself with his life and compositional techniques, most assuredly shaped by what has always been a very distinct British aesthetic. His models and colleagues, including composers like Ralph Vaughan Williams, Roger Quilter, and John Ireland, reinvigorated the English musical culture and elevated the British standing on the world music scene at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. By studying this music in such minute detail, the proper method of performance can be decided and musical decisions will be better informed. Issues like breathing, phrasing, and tempo fluctuations or rubato can be addressed. I wish to expand the knowledge of the art song of Gerald Finzi, which, while not unknown, is markedly seldom performed. It is a perplexing reality considering the abundant amount pieces he wrote for male voice. His works, until only recently, have been ignored as unchallenging or pedestrian; this is an assertion that I intend to prove entirely incorrect. By studying this set, his musical and textual influences (most notably Thomas Hardy) and his life, I can be more certain of the world in which his music was written and the message he meant to convey—one I naturally wish to honor.
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In order to fully understand the compositional style, the philosophy, and the obvious fascination and identification with the melancholic writings of Thomas Hardy, it is necessary to examine the life of Gerald Finzi in detail. Gerald Raphael Finzi was born July 14, 1901 in London, England to John Abraham Finzi and Eliza Emma Finzi, née Leverson. He, like his father, was the last of five children and was an unexpected and undesired introduction to the already burgeoning household. His widow, Joy Finzi, wrote:

Arriving last in a family of five - an unwanted addition to a bursting upper floor nursery and not welcomed by his sister and brothers - he always felt a stranger among them.1

He was the only child who showed any musical interest and regularly sat at the foot of the family piano to listen to his mother play. Eliza continued to foster and encourage his musical pursuits throughout his young life, even after the premature death of his father and subsequent familial turmoil and stress.

At first he was educated privately, but soon after the death of his father from a disfiguring cancer of the hard palate in 1909, he was sent to the Kingswood boarding school in Camberley, Surrey. He spent four years there and from all accounts it was a bad experience: he frequently faked fainting fits in the school bathroom in order to avoid studies and naval preparatory physical drill.2 Perhaps Finzi was trying to garner attention from his family as much as he was attempting to miss class. To quell his ill health, real and imagined, he went to Switzerland for a year until the advent of the First

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World War. After a short tenure at another private school, Mount Arlington, he began studying at Harrogate in 1915. This was to be a wise and profitable decision on the part of his mother. It was more of a cultural centre at the time and had a municipal orchestra during the season. During this period it was conducted by Julian Clifford, and it was he who recommended to Lizzie Finzi that Gerald take music lessons with Ernest Farrar. Given Farrar’s impressive résumé, with four years at the Royal College of Music studying alongside Frank Bridge and Audrey Alston, and a great appreciation for Vaughan Williams, it was valuable preliminary instruction, however short-lived. Farrar had enlisted as a private in the Grenadier Guards and little more than a year after Finzi’s studies began, Farrar was called to join his regiment. Finzi was not neglected, however, in Farrar’s absence; in fact during one of Farrar’s leaves of duty he met with him to introduce species counterpoint. Farrar had informed his young student to ‘keep on writing & study all the music you can lay your hands on. Devour it’, a piece of advice that Finzi followed so ardently that Farrar “scarcely had time even to answer Finzi’s letters with their ‘innumerable queries’ about music which, he said, ‘make by brain reel!’”. Farrar later took the young Finzi to the Royal College of Music to visit his former teacher, Sir Charles Stanford. Stanford, however, advised against Finzi pursuing a musical career, although his motives for such a suggestion can only be speculated.

Finzi was unabashed and, as Farrar was unable to continue any kind of instruction, began lessons with the only teacher whom Farrar could in good conscience recommend: Edward C. Bairstow in York. Finzi was reluctant to begin with Bairstow,

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4 Ibid. 17.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid. 18.
having heard of his strict nature and severe teaching methods. It is safe to say Finzi resisted some of his teacher’s practices as even after three months of lessons, Bairstow, writing to Mrs. Finzi, says, “I think your son and I are beginning to understand one another better now. He is doing much better work, and I am very interested in him.”

Finzi did remain studying with Bairstow for well over four years and, aside from arguments over the validity of studying counterpoint, Bairstow had few negative words to say of the young artist. In fact, it could be said that he treated him as a young colleague, going to pains to perform some of his early works.

Finzi’s relative happiness at this point in his life was soon to be marred by the ill effects of the war. Farrar was sent to France in September of 1918 and was killed only a week later. In mid-October the death of his brother Edgar was confirmed, dying in action with the Fleet Air Arm in the Aegean. These losses came after the death of his brother Douglas, born in 1897, of pneumonia at his school in 1912, and his brother Felix committing suicide in India at the age of twenty, depressed by “adolescent feelings of sexual degeneracy”. Gerald Finzi, still only seventeen years old, had experienced such profound loss in his life that it seems only fitting that he would come to champion the mournful and contemplative poetry of Thomas Hardy later in life. It is from this time that we see his very first composition, and his very shortest. His setting of Herrick’s ‘Upon a Child’ is a mere eight measures long and was published with ‘Time to Rise’ in 1922. He dedicated the work to his mother “as though it somehow touched on her loss or

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8 Ibid. 11
on his task, as the only male left in the family - indeed the only child left at home - of comforting her”.\(^9\)

In June 1922, Lizzie and Gerald were to move yet again, this time to the small village of Painswick in Gloucestershire of the Cotswolds. Banfield states that at the time the Cotswolds attracted three types of artist: the musician, the poet, and the Arts and Crafts tradesmen.\(^10\) All three were to greatly influence him. During this period, he began to meet many musicians whom he did not regard as teachers, but rather as colleagues. Certainly, considering his isolation in Harrogate and the doting of his mother, Rupert Erlebach, Herbert Howells, Howard Ferguson, and Ivor Gurney were some of the first musicians that Finzi was to meet that were not decades his senior. Still, even though these musicians were to meet frequently, Finzi began to take a more “introspective bent”.\(^11\) So, then, did his love for poetry and literature and song composition truly begin to grow. His sister was married in 1918, so Gerald and Lizzie were the only two left in the house. Finzi began to amass many volumes of poetry and prose and early song, a library that was to become quite prodigious. In 1965 his library of music from about 1740 to 1780, considered the finest of its period assembled privately in England at that time, went to St Andrews University, Fife; his library of English literature, his sustenance and inspiration, is housed in the Finzi Book Room at Reading University Library.\(^12\) The Arts and Crafts movement was also a large influence upon his outlook. Many of the beliefs he already held dear, even at the young age of twenty, perfectly aligned with the movement: he was a staunch vegetarian—which he mostly likely inherited from his mother, had an

\(^10\) Ibid. 61.
\(^12\) Ibid.
interest in folk culture, and said himself that he had “violent socialistic tendencies”.13

The general revival of the old music of Great Britain was inextricably linked with the Arts and Crafts movement. The Cotswolds were far enough outside London that they did not feel much modern influence. There were actually many communities that survived as veritable medieval townscapes in which local materials, labor, and methods were still used for all construction and design. And while architecture and design were perhaps the forefront of the Arts and Crafts campaign, music was also a large part. The music of interest was not any adopted musical vernacular from the mainland states of Germany, Italy, or France, but rather a renewed interest in the folksong, chant, or madrigal from yesteryear on the island. These sentiments were only enforced by a strong sense of nationalism that grew out of World War I and Finzi was not the only composer to incorporate such feelings of the English landscape or ‘pastoral’ evocations into his musical interests and compositions. Works by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Herbert Howells, and John Ireland composed at this time are indicative of these ideas.

Finzi lived in the Cotswold region until 1925 and although the landscape was idyllic and rural, one must remember that amidst all the descriptions of his general reclusiveness—a tendency that he would foster for the rest of his life—he was not far from the bustling metropolis of London. He was close enough to take day trips into the city in order to take in various cultural activities. It was also during this time that he first met Ralph Vaughan Williams, but, in general, few events of great importance were to occur during the years before 1925. He attended the Three Choirs Festivals in Gloucester in 1922 and 1925 and occasionally visited Harrogate or stayed with Bairstow in York and

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bought a car.\textsuperscript{14} He began looking abroad, as while he reveled in his seclusion and freedom that Cotswolds could afford him, the fact that Finzi was not a formally trained composer or musician, as in he never attended a conservatory, began to manifest itself in a frustration with technique. In February 1923, he asked Bairstow about R. O. Morris’ Counterpoint textbook and in the summer of 1925, took a three-month private lesson in sixteenth-century counterpoint with Morris himself.\textsuperscript{15} By the end of that year, he decided it was high time for him to move into the city and London was beckoning. While the new environment was no doubt daunting to a small man who had always been an introspective one, he felt it imperative for his career and output. His musician friend, Detmar Blow, found him a small house and he moved in very early in the new year of 1926. Truly, the period in London was one in which he cemented bonds with fellow composers and was a formative time for his own compositional technique. Still, Michael Trend thinks it “impossible to speculate on what Finzi—while probably losing something of his own particular freshness—would have gained from a proper musical training”, which he was, positively or negatively, never to receive.\textsuperscript{16}

Reginald Owen Morris was infinitely more connected with the outside world than those with whom Finzi associated in the Cotswolds. He required his students not only to be well versed in compositional technique, but in music history, as well. Therefore, his students—Finzi, Edmund Rubbra, and Howard Ferguson—were musical intellectuals as well as composers. All three became fond acquaintances with Ferguson and Finzi becoming particularly close with correspondence throughout the rest of their lives. Morris was initially absent for much of the time when Finzi first moved to London

\textsuperscript{14} Banfield, \textit{Gerald Finzi: An English Composer}, 95.  
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. 95.  
\textsuperscript{16} [as quoted in] Banfield, \textit{Gerald Finzi: An English Composer}, 98.
because after their private lessons, Morris took a job at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. When Morris returned, Finzi was even keener to enter his circle of companions, which included Vaughan Williams, Arthur Bliss, and Robin Milford.

Even though he was surrounding himself but what would later be considered bulwarks against the Second Viennese School, Mahler, and the influence of Les Six and French neoclassicism, being in the city allowed him to hear these composers’ works. Concerts were the only way for him to take in new music; he absolutely refused to buy a radio or a phonograph. Of the concerts featuring his contemporaries from the mainland he attended, he found some to be promising and others utterly revolting, saying he left in the middle of a piece by Richard Strauss, calling Mahler “most interesting”, and generally praising Stravinsky and Ravel. Whether he lauded or derided, he never emulated, for while some works being performed in the houses of London may have intrigued him, his philosophy and aesthetic were unavering.

These years in London were the ones from which we find the first vocal compositions, and while some may not be characterized as fully mature, there are others from this period that can be counted among his most highly regarded works. “At a lunar eclipse” dating from 1929, which was later to be included in the posthumous Till Earth Outwears, is included in this category as is the cycle of A Young Man’s Exhortation (1926).

From 1930 to 1936, however, Finzi wrote very little; his work from this period comprised of only a couple of solo songs for baritone, part songs, and an Interlude for oboe and string quartet. He was unhappy in London, and unhappy with the way his

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18 Ibid. 161.
composing career was going, or not going. He did receive a job at the Royal Academy of Music, teaching harmony and counterpoint one day a week to “second study” composition students.\(^\text{19}\) He was ill prepared for such an undertaking considering his own lacking background in formal musical training and general dislike for technical studies. He wrote himself that his job at the “Royal Crematorium” required him to “teach Molly Selby, Audrey Thomas, [et alia] in theory of music, harmony, the first species & such things about which I know nothing & care less”.\(^\text{20}\) Still, he carried on with this job until in 1933 he married Joyce Finzi, née Black. After the marriage the two left London and Finzi’s mature style was finally found. Finzi’s friend Arthur Bliss may have had quite a bit of foresight into the matter:

> The weakness of the songs as a body was in the sameness of emotion in each. You are at present harping on one string, however deliciously. The last work played gave promise of something more, something different to the somewhat nostalgic country dreaming that permeates a good deal of the rest. I was honestly much impressed by passages that had promise of a very deep and original outlook. What you want for the full consummation of it is not more writing, but more living. You must have your full nature exploited by fate—and luckless man you will!—before we shall get the real you. And I believe that is going to be very worth while waiting for. Good luck anyhow.\(^\text{21}\)

Indeed, he may have just needed to fall in love.

Gerald Finzi first met his future wife in 1931 and she wrote, “We immediately became implicated”.\(^\text{22}\) They became betrothed in 1932. He later said that were he not to have married Joyce, he would have surely suffered a nervous breakdown. They moved to a small farm in Ashmansworth, Hampshire in 1937. Finzi then set down for a life of reading, composition, and sundry other activities including the collection of his

\(^{19}\) Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, 169.
\(^{20}\) [as quoted in] Ibid. 169.
\(^{21}\) [as quoted in] Ibid. 160.
\(^{22}\) [as quoted in] Ibid. 174.
prodigious library and cultivating an apple orchard including all the varieties native to his England, over 400 species. Joyce was an artist as well—a visual one—and their home was outfitted for her creative endeavors. The death of his friend Farrar would prompt in him a feeling of mortality; that he must create something that would remain regardless of his departure.

Finzi’s heritage was a Jewish one and so the onset of the Second World War greatly affected him, in spite of his agnosticism. He was a pacifist and did not participate in the war—in fact, he found it, if necessary, then abhorrent. Perhaps, while being upset about goings on in Austria for some time, to the point of insomnia, he had a respite from his thoughts while preparing for the premiere of his *Dies natalis* in 1938 at the Three Choirs Festival, but any distraction was short-lived. He soon put a hiatus on composing and wondered when he would be called for service. In 1940 though, there was a period during which he did compose and wrote his longest piece, ‘Channel firing’, undoubtedly inspired by current events, ‘June on Castle Hill’, and The Elegy for violin and piano. In 1940 he found the time to found the Newbury String Players, and admittedly amateur group that Finzi referred to as “his twenty-five old ladies”\(^\text{23}\) and was offered a job at the Ministry of War Transport, which gave him a full-time salary and no chance of seeing combat time. Needless to say, his time was stretched thin. He was given a leave from the Ministry in 1945 and returned home.

With his children, Christopher and Nigel, now away at boarding school, the Finzi home was only occupied by Joy and himself, for most likely the first time. He began to concentrate a great deal on composition and writing for the Three Choirs Festival. He also, while remaining steadfast in his enjoyment of isolation, took on composition

\(^{23}\) Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, 283.
students and had many visitors to the farm. In 1951 however, he was diagnosed with a fatal illness and doctors gave him few years to live. He suffered from Hodgkin’s Disease, or on the death certificate, lymphoid-follicular reticulosis. His notion of mortality and earthly preservation reinvigorated, he began to rue the fact that his work would be cut short. He revised his works catalogue, entitled Absalom’s Place, and added the following postscript:

Since the preceding pages were written, ten years ago, a good deal more work has been written. Performances, publication & some kindly or generous notice, have all taken place, which I hope my development has justified. But a serious, & possibly fatal, illness has now been confirmed by the Doctors. At 49 I feel I have hardly begun my work

My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun;
And now I live, and now my life is done.

As usually happens, it is likely that new ideas, new fashions & the pressing forward of new generations, will soon obliterate my small contribution. Yet I like to think that in each generation may be found a few responsive minds, and for them I shd [should] still like the work to be available. To shake hands with a good friend over the centuries is a pleasant thing, and the affection which an individual may retain after his departure is perhaps the only thing which guarantees and ultimate life to his work.\footnote{John Russel, “Gerald Finzi.” Musical Times. December, 1956.}

He underwent therapy, but over the coming years became progressively weaker, until he contracted chicken pox during the Gloucester Festival in 1956. Considering the feebleness of his immune system at this point, the virus was too much to handle. On Thursday, September 27, 1956 he died of complications. There was no funeral and Joy kept his ashes until 1973, when she spread them on May Hill at the farm, amongst all his apples.
ENGLISH MUSICAL RENAISSANCE AND FINZI’S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

England has been long subjected to a German jibe, ‘Das Land ohne Musik’, or The Land Without Music. An Englishman in his own right, conductor Sir Thomas Beecham postured that, “The British don’t like music, but they absolutely love the sound it makes”. Needless to say, there has always been music in the British culture, but its place has varied throughout the centuries. The British practically dominated the musical culture in the 14th and 15th centuries, even influencing music written on the continent in the polyphonic style then found in the music of the Catholic faith. The earliest music composed in England that is still fairly mainstream today was written in the form of madrigals, such as those written by William Byrd. Early English song, however, was soon to follow and the lute songs of John Dowland from the late 16th Century and early 17th Century are still frequently performed, with contemporaries such as Robert Ramsey and John Hilton being today mostly overlooked. This practice of writing for the solo voice continued throughout the 1600s with composers such as Henry Lawes who was a teacher of Henry Purcell and who left a prodigious output of over 430 songs. Then there was Purcell himself, who brought to English song a certain gravitas, and we begin to find in his songs a penchant for repetition in order to achieve dramatic effect, flexible movement in recitative sections, and an amplified attention to description of the literary in the musical medium, what we might today call text painting. Composers such as John Blow also wrote during the time of Purcell, bringing the realm of English solo song from the Renaissance vernacular of Dowland into the Baroque style of the late 1600s.

The attention to text and evoking it through the music that the 17th Century composers in

25 Ian Spink, English Song: Dowland to Purcell (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974), 203.
England gave to their compositions was not rivaled until the German Romanticism of the late 19th Century in the works of composers like Hugo Wolf. Still, there is little to discuss in regards to English song, or even the English musical vernacular during the following years. Ian Spink puts it most plainly, and perhaps callously by saying:

Henry Purcell brings the development of English song in the seventeenth century to a peak and to an end. What follows is anticlimax. The Enlightenment had dawned and the lyric Muse was already numb in the cool light of Reason. Materialism and nationalism led Englishmen to discover their genius for commerce and politics. They saw themselves as patrons of the arts, not practitioners.²⁶

Purcell had few contemporaries of great repute and left no progeny to continue in his vein. In addition to his fame and subsequent death in 1695, one must consider the social situation of the time. Peter Pirie contends that during the years of the Commonwealth, there was a stasis in which little art was produced; it was only eleven years, but an important time nonetheless.²⁷ Also, civil war tends to cause any culture’s musical institutions, or other cultural stalwarts, to be put on hiatus. The Glorious Revolution, which ousted James II from the throne, occurred late in the life of Purcell, in 1688, with the subsequent Bill of Rights being accepted in 1689. The whole of the island, save Ireland, were joined in 1707 as the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Considering all the political turmoil of the 1600s in England, I would disagree with what I understand to be Mr. Pirie’s assertion, that art—and in this case music—is seldom created under political duress. It was in the 1600s that England was contributing in an ample way, to the world music scene. It was after the death of Purcell and after political turbulence was quelled that composers abandoned, or never first picked up, their quills. If music history on the mainland in the following centuries is any indication, it is during times of upheaval that

²⁶ Spink. 259.
music flourishes. It is not in any way far-fetched to say that Romanticism was a direct product of the French Revolution and the rejection of formality, both in society and musical syntax. Content reigned supreme over structure. The Impressionism of Debussy then grew out of a rejection of the epitome of German Romanticism: Wagner and Mahler. Schoenberg and his twelve-tone system surfaces around the advent of the First World War. In fact, the Renaissance of England’s musical culture begins just a few decades before the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in 1914. I will take a moment now to elucidate the usage of Renaissance in this paper. The period of composition at the turn of the twentieth century has become known as the English Musical Renaissance, and has been adopted by the circles of musical scholarship. Any references in the remainder of the paper to a Renaissance will be referring to this time period, unless otherwise specified.

Even post-Purcell, the music scene did not die in Britain. The British no longer influenced the music making on the continent nor did they much contribute in any way to the creation of new literature, but they did appreciate what was happening there. The country became increasingly concerned with commerce, law, and an English forte that has never been diminished by any circumstance, literature. Droves of musicians in Germany, Italy, France, and even Russia, initially studied law and invariably left. Western Art music during this time is a veritable who’s who of legal studies dropouts, including C.P.E Bach, George Frideric Handel—or, at the time, Georg Friedrich Händel, Robert Schumann, and later, Ernest Chausson, Igor Stravinsky, and Peter Tchaikovsky. It seems that would be musicians in England found no reason, internal or external, to do

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so. There was also, in the early 18th century, no national school of music and with the absence of any earlier generation to pass on the art, youths found other ways of achieving success. That success as a culture afforded them the opportunity to import mainland artists. If England wasn’t creating its own music in their own vernacular, then they were certainly patronizing the masters of mainland Europe. The first they were to adopt was George Frideric Handel, who enjoyed the country so much that he officially Anglicized his name and remained in the country for the great majority of his adult life from his first visit in 1710 to his death in 1759. Great Britain then received the first performances of almost all of his mature works including his Italianate operas *Giulio Cesare*, *Serse*, and *Alcina* and his oratorios *Saul*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, and the ubiquitous *Messiah*, which premiered in Dublin. One can even look at the other two composers engaged at the Royal Academy of Music in London where many of his earlier operas were premiered and notice that while the English apparently enjoyed opera—or at least the upper class enjoyed “the noise it made”—they were only too happy to partake of the Italian model. Handel’s biggest competitors of the day, though their names are today virtually forgotten, were Giovanni Bononcini and Filippo Amadei, both educated in Italy. The English considered Handel to be a citizen of England—he was naturalized in 1726—and therefore his music, mostly operatic or choral works, the later ones being written in Britain’s tongue, was English. At his death, he was buried in Westminster Abbey. And he was only the first in a line of English figurehead composers who were not born or trained there, and who composed in a decidedly German or Italian musical language, and yet, for similar reasons, appealed to the English.

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Muzio Clementi is the next noteworthy name one must mention. Born in Rome, he was brought to England at the young age of fourteen to study keyboard. He was highly regarded for his playing and toured all of Europe and frequently visited Russia. He was to later teach a young Irish musician, John Field, who is one of the only truly successful British musicians from this period. It comes as no surprise then that he was taught by an Italian and felt the need to eventually leave the island and spend the majority of his life and career in Russia. Clementi and Field both were known for their affinity at the keyboard, and Clementi even participated in a competition with one Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and was deemed by the powers that were to be equal. Absent from the musical scene in England, however, was their former métier: song. Plenty of works were being performed in the metropolises of Great Britain, but these almost solely included symphonies and overtures, opera arias and duets, and chamber works in a concert setting, and fully staged operatic performances, the London public having a particular affinity for the works of Mozart. Simon McVeigh compiled the following table regarding the works performed in the early 19th Century by examining the Philharmonic Society’s programs and came up with the following:30

Figure 1. Philharmonic Society Repertoire, early 19th Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMPHONIES</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Continental composers</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British-born composers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERTURES OR SIMILAR</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Continental composers</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British-born composers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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What was missing, in addition to British composers themselves, was the growing interest on the mainland in solo song, which was in yesteryear highly regarded by the British public. It is true that during the Classical period, the German composers were only beginning to explore lieder, but one of Clementi’s most significant peers, Mozart, wrote many satisfying songs, as later did Beethoven. It was during the latter part of Beethoven’s life, who was admittedly not as versed himself in the intricacies of writing for the human voice, when the German lied began to flourish with sundry works by Franz Schubert and Robert Schumann, to name only two.

One of Schumann and Schubert’s contemporaries was also seduced by the call of Great Britain. Felix Mendelssohn was the English bastion of mainland music during the Victorian era, one that is said in all its practicality and utilitarianism to have had a “low opinion of art music”. The Industrial Revolution came early to Great Britain, and it had little time for the luxuries it deemed as the arts, which were perhaps blemished with the excess of eighteenth-century hedonism. Yet Mendelssohn was well received and made no less than ten visits to Great Britain during his lifetime, with many of his works being premiered there. He, like his predecessors in England, was perhaps so successful because of his musical conservatism. Handel composed in Baroque locutions at a time when the mainland composers were abandoning the formality of the language of Bach and embracing the *empfindsamer Stil* that intended to express natural feelings, a style in which it was permissible for those feelings to change within a single piece. Clementi’s compositional technique was also without radicalism, and although he lived well into the Romantic period, his works remained rigidly adhered to the Classical form, without the overt emotionalism of Beethoven. Then Mendelssohn came along in the 1830s and was

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31 Stradling & Hughes. 11.
undoubtedly the most conservative composer of his era, rejecting the chromaticism of Chopin, Liszt, and Wagner, instead composing harmonically simplistic pieces with singable melodic lines. As Stradling and Hughes state, if Mendelssohn brought Romanticism to the English musical life, then he brought a ‘safe’ version. He was a Protestant, a musical scholar—his research into the music of J. S. Bach is reputable, and the son of a wealthy banking family during a time when fiscal success was most admired. It comes as no small shock, then, that his death in 1847 was seen as a colossal blow to the musical scene in Great Britain.

It was about this time when things in Great Britain began to change. The Royal Academy of Music, founded in 1822, began to produce artists of great repute. During the 1860s, the British began to realize that having a distinct musical culture, and therefore native composers producing works, was a source of national pride, and they were severely lacking in the field; it became nothing less than a political priority. Queen Victoria began awarding knighthood to prominent musicians of British heritage and those initial forerunners of the British musical Renaissance, including Sir Arthur Sullivan—of Gilbert and Sullivan fame, Charles Stanford, and Hubert Parry, began establishing schools in composition in the newly established music colleges. Another integral part in the growth of music in England was the first publication of the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, first published in 1878. While today is one of the two most comprehensive music reference resources—along with *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, it was originally almost a piece of English music propaganda, giving composers from the island unparalleled, and sometimes undeserved, exposure. Purcell

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32 Stradling & Hughes. 13.
33 Ibid. 14.
and his output, albeit valuable and meritorious, was given an article substantially more sizable than that of J. S. Bach, whose Ausgabe contains over 90 volumes; Purcell’s has around 30.

Grove’s penchant for exaggeration in the realm of British music was no longer to be a necessity. Perhaps the two most influential composers in creating what is ‘Englishness’ or ‘Britishness’ in music are Sir Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams, and their fin de siècle rise to fame truly ushered in an era of British music by British musicians. Sir Edward Elgar was not a formally trained musician and his rise to prominence was done without ever being part of the ‘London-led’ revival.\textsuperscript{34} He was a self-proclaimed outsider of middle-class background who left school at age fifteen. He married in 1889, and it was after this betrothal that he began to produce works of the highest value; it was also at this time that through the social prominence of his wife, they were not being ignored. He spent ten years in which he composed for provincial choral groups before a national reputation was established. And while Elgar became immensely popular and had much of his music performed for the royal family, he was to remain an outsider of the Renaissance, not only due to his informal education, his Catholicism, and his love of seclusion, but also his adherence to German harmonic language, leitmotifs, and persistent sequential repetitions.\textsuperscript{35} Charles Stanford, and Irish composer who spent the majority of his life in England and was also instrumental in the South-Kensington musical Renaissance (the London school of thought that valued producing music based on British heritage), said of Elgar that his origins were tainted with ‘trade’ and that his

\textsuperscript{34} Stradling & Hughes. 47.
\textsuperscript{35} Grout & Palisca. 659.
music was ‘vulgar’.\textsuperscript{36} Regardless of his German influences, England had produced an artist who was not only popular in England among the general public and royalty, but also on the main continent; Elgar’s inherent talent was undeniable. Richard Strauss said: “I raise my glass to the welfare and success of the first English progressivist, Meister Edward Elgar, and of the young progressivist school of English composers.”\textsuperscript{37} Great Britain could no longer be called the land without music.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was fifteen years Elgar’s junior and entered the musical scene in a different way entirely. He grew up in an upper-middle class family and was educated at the Royal College of Music—in South Kensington—where he became keenly aware of the value of musical scholarship, especially in the realm of Tudor music and English folk-song, what Stradling and Hughes refer to as the ‘historical-pastoral’ obsession which was to characterize English music for the first half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{38} Vaughan Williams was the first editor of the \textit{English Hymnal} completed in 1906, being accepted to the post after the recommendation of Cecil Sharp, another advocate for scholarship in folk-song. Many major works following its publication, such as \textit{Rhapsody on a Theme by Thomas Tallis} and \textit{Variations on Dives and Lazarus}, owed their inspiration to British song or Tudor compositions. He also wrote many solo vocal pieces including \textit{On Wenlock Edge}, \textit{Songs of Travel}, and \textit{Ten Blake Songs}. This interest in vocal music was to be echoed in countless colleagues and composers of the next generation who wished to revive this most English of genres, including Roger Quilter, Frank Bridge, John Ireland, George Butterworth, Peter Warlock, and one Gerald Finzi.

\textsuperscript{36} Stradling & Hughes. 55.
\textsuperscript{37} [as quoted in] Ibid. 47.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. 61.
And so, after this particularly general summation of the musical situation in England since its original heyday, we have reached the time and world of Finzi. His compositional style grows directly out of the occurrences on the island at the turn of the century, and is unashamedly English. Arthur Bliss says of his works:

If a foreigner new to England wishes to taste the special flavour of English music, and find wherein it differed from the music of his own country, he could do no better than study first the music of Gerald Finzi. Here he would come on music that exhales the very air of England.39 Gerald Finzi is often billed as a most British composer. What then constitutes such ‘Englishness’? In his book entitled ‘Englishness’ in Music, author James Day gives his lengthy definition of the term and people:

The comments [in the past chapter] suggest a people that is highly conservative and deeply suspicious of innovation; unimaginative, conformist and matter-of-fact, yet individualistic and quirky; not particularly worried by rough and ready craftsmanship or technical flaws as long as something ‘works’; pragmatic and eclectic rather than formalistic in their approach to style and layout; not always articulate, despite the supreme expressive qualities of their language; relying to an almost excessive degree on custom and a kind of sleep-walking intuition rather than on planning or careful thought; quietly self-confident and therefore regarding boastfulness and ostentation as indicative of lack of breeding; self-disciplined, with a strong sense of fair play and of law and order; ribald and at times scurrilous in their attitude to rigid authority, but rarely malicious or merciless; suspicious of self-importance and pedantry, yet respectful of the correct observance of ceremony and ritual—above all, in fact, moderate.40

This is, in a very overall sense, an adequate description of the music and compositional style of Gerald Finzi, but also, in reviewing the biography already presented, applicable to his personality and philosophy. I will attempt to explore parallels in his music to the above testimony in greater detail.

Continental models are almost entirely absent from his works and one would be
taxed to try and find any influence of Wagner, Strauss, or Debussy. Their overt
emotionalism or ingenuity would be, to quote Mr. Day, too ostentatious or innovative to
constitute Englishness. His influences were English themselves: Vaughan Williams,
Parry, Holst, and Butterworth. And these composers were products of the Renaissance,
in which the English model was being created.

Finzi’s musical language is conservative in regard to harmony. His idiom is
devoid of the overt chromaticism of the Romantic German school and is fairly diatonic,
much like the music of Mendelssohn, if not even more devoid of modulation, whom the
British so admired. While the innovations of the twentieth century in regard to harmony,
or lack thereof, were not unknown to Finzi, he chose not to explore boundaries and
endeavor to break them. Rather, he wished to continue the work of that previous
generation of Englishmen who, while not aspiring to emulate the previous golden era of
British music centuries before, nevertheless, evoked its spirit in a new musical Western
vernacular that, at its core, strove to do justice to the text. This meant that Finzi would
harbor a great love for song composition, only paralleled by his love for literature, and
namely that of Thomas Hardy, whose works he almost exclusively set to music.

Poetry was immensely important to Finzi and therefore he exacted great care in
regards to how it was set to music. He published almost 80 songs, and 40 of these were
Hardy settings. Hardy’s poetry frequently utilized atypical forms, and yet Finzi chose to
undertake the challenge of setting works that were not written in the ideal four-line
stanzas and contained a language that is “craggy and rugged, deliberately sprinkled with
antique phrases, Dorset dialect-words and Anglo-Saxonisms.” These challenges can be overcome because his works still are very conducive to musical treatment; sometimes Hardy would even denote the mode a composer should adopt in setting a verse. He intended for his works to be used in the musical realm. Finzi, while having certain other compositional drawbacks, set the words with such discretion that when spoken in the rhythm written, the text frequently mirrors conversational inflections. Not only was he adept at mimicking speech, Finzi also used eloquent phrasing, with a rise and fall that follows speech, thought, and general dramatic flow—rising action, climax, and falling action. His phrases, in a form of structural diminution, follow the structure of the pieces in the overall configuration. Although notes seldom move chromatically, they rise by step with leaps upward on dramatic words and thoughts. His melodies rarely are ‘hummable’ or particularly memorable, but do just service to the words to which they are written. An infectious tune is not required in art song, and can in fact be thusly labeled as trivial, but many songwriters, including Quilter, Ireland, and Britten have been able to embrace a text with indelible melodic ideas without loss of quality. Finzi so religiously followed the dictum of ‘one note per syllable’ that, because of either will or ability, he limited himself.

While Hardy, in a contradiction of Day’s assertions, was wildly expressive with his mastery of the English language and its dialects, Finzi fit the mould he described if one considers the language Finzi spoke: a musical one. The expressiveness that one can achieve through music was not fully realized. True, Finzi had little formal training, but his consistency in composition is almost stifling with little variance in accompanimental

42 Ibid. 399.
textures and mood. It can be cliché and hackneyed. In almost every song, you can find a walking bass line with contrapuntal piano voice lines above, much like the chorale sound of many of Vaughan Williams hymn settings. It can be highly effective, but he rarely, if ever, chooses to forgo this template. For a man who so detested learning and, later, teaching counterpoint, it is ubiquitous in his works. Finzi’s rare excursions into dance-like pieces frequently utilized the rhythm of the sarabande—a slow, triple meter dance found in the traditional dance suite of the Baroque period. Hold also comments upon another pitfall, what he calls the “bane of English songwriting, the throbbing rhythmic figure”. It is meant as an effective means of increasing intensity and achieving forward motion, but is used exceptionally often; we will see it in “Let me enjoy the Earth”, “The Market Girl”, “Life laughs onward” from *Till Earth Outwears* alone.

Finzi, in championing Hardy’s work, also created in his collected works an overbearing seriousness. As a man it was one of his traits, as well. The melancholy, introspectiveness is not altogether unappealing, but he seldom, if ever, offers an audience respite from lugubriousness. Finzi had a lack of humor, and it is apparent in his compositions. In addition to being fond of minor mode, he rarely evokes a light mood, rather relying on the heavy text of Hardy to manifest itself in his musical language. Hardy’s texts were not entirely to blame; in reading about the life and philosophy of Finzi, you would find that the two were very similar. A certain sense of gaiety can counter any accusation of pomposity or pretentiousness. Finzi was neither, but the gravitas can seem foreboding and desolate, almost evoking the German Romanticism of Hugo Wolf (with whom Finzi is oft compared). The ability to write pieces that shed light
on the human existence in a light-hearted way, as opposed, or in addition, to a philosophical one, would have been a great asset for the composer.

Despite these drawbacks—every composer is accused of some imperfection—Finzi’s works are most deservedly held in high regard. He has rightly been dubbed the “poet’s composer” for his scansion. He also took the task of composing seriously. Published pieces of his may have been years in the making. His dear friend Howard Ferguson stated that “Writing was never a fluent business for him, and even the most spontaneous sounding song might have involved endless sketches with possibly a break of years between its opening and closing verses.” Finzi was able to devote such time and thought to his compositions over vast periods of time because his compositional technique only varied in extremely minute ways throughout the span of his life. Just look at Till Earth Outwears, which is as cohesive a song set as any of Finzi’s—the work is posthumously compiled with the earliest of the seven songs being composed in 1927 and the latest finished days before his death in 1956. Few composers could place together works comprising a three-decade span that goes almost entirely unnoticed. Overall, his accompaniments did become more complex as his aged, but such generalizations can be upended; “At a lunar eclipse”, which is one of the most effective, complex, and extensive songs Finzi ever wrote, was written in 1929, earlier than most of the rest.

Finzi’s output of over 80 songs may be dwarfed by the prodigious output of some of the German Romantic lied masters, such as Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf, but the works he did produce are nonetheless worthy of the intelligent singer’s investigation. Performing them requires attention to detail and musical, as well as literary, skill and intuition. They are deserving of their eternal place in the repertoire, just as Finzi is

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43 [as quoted in] Hold. 397.
deserving of his place among the great British composers who brought English music back to England.
**TILL EARTH OUTWEARS: AN IN DEPTH STUDY**

*Till Earth Outwears: Background of the Cycle*

The song set *Till Earth Outwears* was not fully imagined as a cohesive whole by Finzi himself. These works were during his lifetime just single pieces, amongst many others, that he wished to later compile as he saw fit. In his works catalogue, he had even left blank spaces to fill with opuses he would complete later in life. Seeing as it was cut short by his disease, and that his last years were ones of heightened output, he left a great many songs unpublished, some 25 individual pieces. It was then up to his widow, son, and dear composing colleague, Howard Ferguson to try and amass these songs and publish them in a manner closest to what Gerald Finzi had imagined. Two Thomas Hardy sets were compiled: *Till Earth Outwears*, Op. 19a for high voice and *I Said to Love*, Op. 19b for low voice. The other two sets were songs with words by various poets: *To a Poet*, Op. 13a for high voice and *Oh Fair to See*, Op. 13b for low voice. These song sets were published two years after the death of Gerald Finzi by Boosey & Hawkes in 1958. One piece, “Life laughs onward”, did not fit into the categories of high or low voice because Finzi indicated on the original copy in pencil that it would be appropriate for either tenor or baritone. Joy and Christopher Finzi and Howard Ferguson could have placed it in either *Till Earth Outwears* or *I Said to Love*, but chose the first and transposed it up a whole tone in order for the piece to be in the appropriate tessitura. They felt that the contrasting mood of the piece—I would say that only “Let me enjoy the Earth” and “The Market-Girl” are equal in their relative light-heartedness—served the
song set in an especially useful way.\textsuperscript{44} The works contained therein span nearly three decades, yet it was most likely Finzi’s intention for at least six of these seven works to be performed together. The title of the set is found in the last stanza of the text used for “In years defaced”. All poems were published by Thomas Hardy not as a cohesive set themselves, but at different points in his writing career.

To avoid confusion, I will take an opportunity here, before I begin discussing the individual works, to inform that I will frequently refer to voices in the piano writing as soprano, alto, tenor, or bass because of Finzi’s style of writing for the instrument, which is frequently a chorale texture. I will attempt to make it quite clear when I use such terminology and am referring to the piano part.

\textsuperscript{44} Howard Ferguson, et al., Editor’s Note to \textit{Till Earth Outwears}, Op. 19a by Gerald Finzi (London and New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1958), 2.
“Let me enjoy the Earth”

Let me enjoy
(minor key)

I
Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

II
About my path there flits a Fair
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I’ll charm me with her ignoring air,
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

III
From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown,
I’ll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

IV
And some day hence, towards Paradise
And all its blest—if such should be—
I will lift glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.45

This Hardy poem comes from a collection entitled *A Set of Country Songs* that was published in 1909, although written at different times throughout his life. He seems to have imagined the poem being set to music from its conception as he indicates the mode in which the song should be written. Finzi, however, did not acquiesce to his request, and I think it a justifiable and appropriate choice. Hardy’s library of poems frequently reference age, death, regret, and loneliness, and yet this poem, while essentially doubting the existence of a biblical Paradise, if not a creator of it, is quite

positive. And while Hardy feels that if it did exist, even though he would not be included in its confines, he shall enjoy the Earth no less and look upon paradise with “glad” eyes, even though it was not meant for him. Finzi then made an excellent decision in choosing to write this piece in a major mode; it works well for the set and does justice to the text and its subject matter.

The exact date of composition is unsure and there are conjectures ranging from ‘before 1936’ by McVeigh to as early as 1927 as postured by Banfield because of motives found in both sketch books from the time and the piece itself. It was originally written in the key of E-flat Major and was perhaps considered to be included in Earth and Air and Rain. Gerald Finzi, himself, since it was not to be part of that cycle for baritone, later transposed the piece up a minor third to be sung by tenor. The melodic form is a very simple song form of A-B-B\textsuperscript{1}-A\textsuperscript{1}. Corresponding measure numbers are as follows: A, measures 1-10; B, measures 11-17; B\textsuperscript{1}, measures 18-25; and A\textsuperscript{1}, measures 26-36, directly in correlation to the stanzas. The rhythmic patterns, in addition to the melody, support this division of sections. The first and fourth stanzas are underscored by a piano part that, while different in regards to harmony, keeps a steady movement of eighths notes. The second and third stanzas, with a text that evokes movement, with words such as ‘flits’ and ‘moving’ and ‘pour’, have more forward motion with almost constant sixteenth notes. There are no changes in time signature, which is much more surprising, considering his usual compositional technique, than the fact that there is no modulation either. Even small shifts in tonal center are absent.

The opening motive in the piano is echoed in the singer with slight alteration, mimicking the piano soprano line underneath it. Variants of this theme again occur in the

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46 Banfield, Gerald Finzi: An English Composer, 241.
piano’s tenor voice at measure 9, in the bass voice in the piano at measure 25, in the vocal line in measure 26 and 29, and in the piano’s soprano voice in measure 34. This four-note motive provides cohesiveness to the piece (see Example 1).

Example 1. “Let me enjoy the Earth”, measures 1-3

All verses begin with an eighth note pick-up on an offbeat and are supported and imitated in contour by the piano. The first and the fourth verses are the most dramatic in regard to content and therefore are the two that reach into the upper portions of the tenor range, with the highest note on ‘glad’ in the final stanza, as the tempo slows to a greater degree. They also have a slower harmonic rhythm and seem to be, therefore, more profound. It adequately conjures Hardy’s brash defiance of seeking Paradise, to instead enjoy the pleasures of the Earth. The final three measures of the piece feature a jarring dissonance of an A-natural against the G-flat chord that resolves by half-, then whole-step to a g-flat, just as Hardy, or the singer, has been resolved to his lot, and has, while perhaps not being the norm or holding mainstream principles, found his place.

The piece is not a particularly difficult one with which to achieve success. It is rhythmically and harmonically straightforward and the text does not ask that a singer have extreme insight into the philosophical implications of the human existence. All
tempo variations are notated and the ritandandi preceding the entrance of the singer, with subsequent a tempi, are easy to achieve as it correlates to a common sense of musical phrasing. Its greatest difficulty, aside from the singer having to achieve a successful, sustained g-flat and a-flat, lies in the piano part, which features a great deal of contrapuntal inner voice writing in the second and third verses. The editorial tempo marking is 69 beat per minute to the half note and the estimated time of performance in one minute, 35 seconds.
“In Years defaced”

A Spot

In years defaced and lost,
Two sat here, transport-tossed,
Lit by a living love
The wilted world knew nothing of:
Scared momentarily
By gaingivings,
The hoping things
That could not be…

Of love and us no trace
Abides upon the place;
The sun and shadows wheel,
Season and season sereward steal;
Foul days and fair
Here, too, prevail,
And gust and gale
As everywhere.

But lonely shepherd souls
Who bask amid these knolls
May catch a faery sound
On sleepy noontides from the ground
“O not again
Till Earth outwears
Shall love like theirs
Suffuse this glen!”

Hardy’s poem, “A Spot” comes from a set of poetry entitled Poems of the Past and Present, published in 1902. Finzi decided to name the piece to which it was set by the first line, “In Years defaced”. It was composed in April of 1936 and is one of Finzi’s most successful pieces. It is, along with “At a lunar eclipse”, one of two pieces in Till Earth Outwears that is considered to be some of his best song writing he ever achieved. The poems structure is decidedly unusual, and bears a strange likeness to Psalm 148 in A

47 Hardy. 127.
New Version of the Psalms of David. Hardy was a self-proclaimed agnostic, but was something of a biblical scholar. Regardless, it is one of his more engaging and evocative poems. Its tender rendering of lost love is poignant in that it realizes that while it ‘was not meant to be’, the glen where they convened and the shepherds that inhabit it will forever be haunted by a ‘faery sound’. Their love changed the landscape and postulates that Nature is able to recognize and assimilate human emotion into its existence. The dramatic picture painted is only heightened by the musical setting of Gerald Finzi. It is no wonder, then, that Joy, Christopher, and Howard chose to use climax of the piece—the melodic fragment of the text ‘Till Earth outwears’ is interestingly enough, a quotation from Vaughan Williams’ A Sea Symphony—and its text as the name for the set of songs.

The piece was written in a signature of D minor and ends in this key. However, there is a startling lack of a leading tone, with occurrences of C-natural for outnumbering those of C-sharp. One could postulate that the piece is really modal based on an Aeolian scale beginning on D—Aeolian mode can be easily identified by playing an octave scale on all white keys from $a$ to $a^1$ on a piano, and is the equivalent of a natural minor scale. It is in common time with three measures of 5/4, two of which prepare for the interlude and modulation to F major before the second verse and the other precedes the climactic moment, heightening and prolonging the suspense of the ‘faery’ quote ‘O not again’ before climbing to the $a^1$ on ‘Earth’.

The piece is exceedingly dissonant in parts, with ‘crunching’ chords, containing both major and minor seconds, written at the beginning (see Example 2) and ending of

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49 Banfield, Gerald Finzi: An English Composer, 221.
the first stanza, and the end of the piece. These moments usually contain non-chord tones as well as suspensions, and Finzi’s affinity for writing contrapuntally allows all these dissonant notes to resolve before the vocalist enters or before the final cadence, or when the mode begins to change from minor to major in measures 13 and 14. The first verse, while being more consonant than its directly surrounding material in the piano, is less lyrical and less consonant than the last two. The lack of narrative in the first stanza may explain this choice of Finzi’s. When the second stanza of text begins, the vocal line is, while still disjunct, more consonant and melodic than the first, and is also in F Major. The end of the piece is characterized by that ubiquitously lauded rallentando and subsequent soaring vocal line that almost stops time, with the piano playing sundry dissonant seconds and tritones until it reaches stasis with a D minor chord held until there is ‘niente’.

Example 2. “In Years defaced”, measures 1-4

Also valuable to consider is the thematic cohesiveness of the piece. A falling by step, four-note motive is found frequently throughout the piece and is first introduced in the piano introduction in alto and tenor voices (see Example 2). We find it again in measure 13 in the piano, measure 20 in both the vocal and piano line, measure 29 in the piano and in inversion in the voice, and in measures 33 and 34 in the piano. What,
perhaps, makes the climax of the piece so very ingenious is that while this four note pattern continues down in various piano voices over measures 33 and 34, the actual tenor singing voice moves in the opposite direction. The ‘faery’ voice is still telling the story of the lovers, although they no longer visit the glen and is moving against the downward decay and abandonment, captured in the piano, that time brings.

The tempo provided is Andante with circa 66 beats to a quarter note. The majority of the dynamic markings, as is typical of Finzi, are provided only for the pianist. It would be effective for the vocalist to begin the piece softly and pay supreme attention to the text in regards to growing intensity. An accent is indicated against the forte chord with appoggiatura in the piano in measure 22 and again, after a crescendo in measure 24 on the high $a^1$. The only other dynamic marking is that of a pianissimo in measure 33 when the vocalist begins the faery quote. Finzi has just provided a simple base from which the vocalist must decide the extent of dynamicism that they deem necessary and warranted. Most important to do justice to the music and text is to observe the accelerandi in measures 7, 9, and 24. The first is inspired by the rapture that the two lovers feel, ‘lit by a living love’, and highlights the $a\text{ tempo}$ on the word ‘wilted’, which could even be taken slightly out of tempo. The next accelerando occurs during the text, ‘scared, momently’. The heightening of emotion can again be evoked with a simple increase in tempo, while it eases back to the beginning pulse on ‘hoping things that could not be’. In a classic case of text depiction, there is also an accelerando on ‘gust and gale’.

The piece is one of the more difficult in the set. There are tessitura difficulties at the end of the second and third verses, and pianissimi passaggio and post-passaggio notes are not easy to achieve, even for the most experienced tenor and this dynamic is
absolutely obligatory to create the other worldly, magical sound Hardy wishes to quote.

Combined with the depth and complexity of the text with difficult vocabulary, it requires greater musical and literary insight than perhaps “The Market-Girl” or “It never looks like Summer” would necessitate. To aid the singer, some of the more difficult and arcane terms are defined here: ‘transport-tossed’ means to be moved with euphoria, ‘gain-givings’ are offerings in return, to move ‘sereward’ is to decay, and faery is an antiquated spelling of fairy.50 The edition gives an estimated performance time of two minutes, 40 seconds.

“The Market-Girl”

The Market-Girl

Nobody took any notice of her as she stood on the causey kerb,
All eager to sell her honey and apples and bunches of garden herb;
And if she had offered to give her wares and herself with them too that day,
I doubt if a soul would have cared to take a bargain so choice away.

But chancing to trace her sunburnt grace that morning as I passed nigh,
I went and I said “Poor maidy dear!—and will none of the people buy?”
And so it began; and soon we knew what the end of it all must be,
And I found that though no others had bid, a prize had been won by me.51

“The Market-Girl” comes from a group of poems entitled “At Casterbridge Fair” from set of poems A Set of Country Songs, from which “Let me enjoy” was also taken. It was first published separately in 1903. It is one of the more easily accessible poems utilized in the set, and from the entire treasury of Hardy’s works. The story is that of a maiden trying to sell honey, apples, and garden herbs on the side of the street, with the passersby taking no notice of her. The narrator takes a chance and strikes up a conversation with the young woman, which was to become the first step in what was to be a glorious relationship. He has won the prize of a beautiful love, regardless of the end to which all relationships and people come. Finzi wrote the piece in 1927 and is the earliest piece included in Till Earth Outwears. It is, consequently, fairly simple, although

51 Hardy. 224.
the lack of concrete tonal centers in something which one typically doesn’t find in his works from this period.

The beginning of the piece is extremely stagnant and sparse. There are ten measures of piano introduction with only eight chord changes. The harmonic rhythm is no faster than one change per measure, sometimes with even slower motion, as is the case in measures 4 and 5 with the tied half notes. This is a means of evoking the loneliness of the young woman, as she tries to sell her produce to a public all too uninterested. Carlisle has speculated that the rhythmical motive found throughout the piece \( \text{\begin{music}\bar{0}\text{\textstyle \frac{4}{4}}\end{music}} \), which is first introduced in measure 3, is a means of representing the people walking by without acknowledging her.\(^{52}\) I find this to be an adequate assumption. Variations return often, but it is recreated in contour and precise rhythm on the text ‘none of the people’ in measure 34. It is the most easily recognizable unifying device in the piece. When the voice does enter in measure 11, it is with little more support from the piano. This allows the singer to achieve more fluctuation in tempo, as the beginning section is marked quasi recit., or like recitative. The rhythm and rise and fall of the melody fit more perfectly with the text than even some other Finzi pieces. In this first section, the piece does bring to mind the early compositions of Purcell or Dowland.

The piece is through-composed and it is difficult to even divide the piece with the divisions of the poetry. The piano is utilized mostly as a means of harmonic support and plays a subservient role to the voice, unlike some of his other vocal compositions that give the piano large solo interludes. After the prologue there is no more than a beat and a half of an absence of the singer. It is perhaps best, ignoring the structure of the poem, to

\(^{52}\) Carlisle. 46.
divide the piece into three parts in regards to musical ideas. There are two critical shifts during the piece and they occur in measures 22 and 37, where the motion of the piece shifts from quarter note values to eighth note values and the tempo advances 4 beats a minute, and then from eighth note to sixteenth note values, respectively. Finzi is adequately increasing the motion of the piece with the intensity and enthusiasm of the text. Still, one cannot use this division to inform their complete understanding of the piece seeing as it does not correlate to the stanzas of poetry. A divide at measure 22 would break up antecedent and consequent textual phrases.

The harmonic support of the piano is vague. The key signature indicates that the piece is in either F Major or d minor, however in measure 11, the piano introduction resolves to a G Major chord. There is a complete lack of cadencing—as I said the vocal line, except to breathe and for a change of thought at measure 36 is without breaks—makes it difficult to establish a tonality. Adding to the confusion is extensive use of non-chord tones and a lack of leading tone. One could say that the tonality leans toward f minor for the majority of the piece, although the E-flats would be a lowered leading tone and there is an absence of A-flat after measure 21. We being to encounter E-naturals in measure 30 and hear a strong B-flat Major chord moving to a C Major chord in measures 34 and 35, which would be a IV-V motion in F Major. The first actual V-I cadence, however, is found in the next to last measure of the song, from the first beat to the second, C Major to F Major (see Example 3). After a great deal of uninterrupted story telling, we have arrived at a point of solidity and equilibrium. The narrator has won his prize.

This song is one of the easiest of the song set for various reasons. The text is not one that is all that profound. It is a straightforward narrative to which even young singers could relate and understand. It is rhythmically simple with only one bar of altered time signature, and that occurs during the singer’s final note. Although the range of the piece is wide, from $c$ to $a^1$, the tessitura is relatively low. There is a complete lack of dynamic markings in the vocal line, but one can reference the piano part to inform decisions in regard to volume and intensity. It is important that the singer heed the direction of quasi recit. during the first lines and ritenuto in measure 31 so that the a tempo in measure 37 is effective in moving the song and thought forward toward the climax. It would also be advisable within the ritenuto to delineate the narrative and the quote with a small luftpause. A slight ritardando in the final measure on ‘won by me’ may also add a sense of finality and triumph. The provided tempo markings are 72 beats to the minute and then 76 at measure 22. The estimated time of performance is one minute, 30 seconds.
“I look into my Glass”

I look into my glass

I look into my glass.
And view my wasting skin,
And say, “Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!”

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity,

But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals, lets part abide;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbings of noontide.53

This poem is the final one in the set *Wessex Poems*, first published in 1898. It is a stirring poem about the ill effects of aging from a man who was nearly sixty. He wrote in his journal 18 October, 1891:

“Hurt my tooth at breakfast-time. I look in the glass. Am conscious of the humiliating sorriness of my earthly tabernacle, and of the sad fact that the best of parents could do not better for me… Why should a man’s mind have been thrown in to such close, sad, sensational, inexplicable relations with such a precarious object as his own body?54

He regrets that while he still has the ability to love, mentally and physically, the latter self has not been treated kindly with the passage of time. He wishes only that if his body were to deteriorate so, then so should his heart. If he lost the ability to love, then it would not cause so much pain when he was brushed aside. ‘Hearts grown cold’ must refer to

53 Hardy, 72.
his wife, Emma, who he felt had come to resent “his dreams, his ideas, and himself”\(^5\). They were later estranged until her death. And yet, because he still has desires, it makes his wait for endless rest, and the loneliness that accompanies it, even more unbearable as time continues to steal parts of his being and cruelly let others remain.

Finzi set this poem to music sometime in the 1930s. It is a relatively short piece, the second shortest in the set, lasting a mere 17 measures, but is a very effective composition; length does not always accompany quality. There is a lack of key signature, which, without further exploration would indicate that the piece is in either C Major or a minor. It, however, does not come close to establishing either of these scale degrees as a tonal center. The end of the piano introduction ends on a D Major triad, but it is not a true cadence. The piece ends on a G minor triad, but this is not reached by means of any cadential pattern either; the chord that proceeds it is nothing more than a tone cluster comprised of \(A-c-g-b-flat-d\). The strongest allusion to any tonal center occurs in measure 10, when it is surely, however temporarily, in d minor.

The structure of the piece is in two sections, A-B, divided between measures 1-10 and 11-17, in direct correlation with the poem’s stanzas. It does emulate a glass—in this case a mirror—in that it ends in very much the same way that is begins. We have the syncopated chords, which rise in the bass in measures 1 and 2, and then fall in measures 15 through 17 (see Example 4). The syncopated rhythm also occurs in measure 11 between the two musical sections, and most likely represents the ‘throbblings of noontide’.

This piece is another in the set that does not require extremely advanced capabilities. The tessitura is lower than some of the others and it avoids almost any movement through the passagio. The g⁴ is approached by leap and proceeds down by step. This is a large dramatic moment and is really the only difficult phrase in the piece. The greatest demands lie in conveying the spirit of the text. First one must be able to conjure what Hardy deems to be the sadness of old age, regardless of years. In one of the most effective moments in the entire song set, Finzi writes the phrase ‘shakes this fragile frame’ above an extremely dissonant line. Such excellent requires a singer’s full attention. There are, once again, no dynamic markings in the vocal line, but the piano does not reach a volume above piano except on the aforementioned phrase where the dramatic intensity reaches its peak and the text is less introspective. It would behoove the performers then, to make this contrast marked by following the marked soft dynamics. There is a luftpause marked in measure 5 between ‘pass’ and ‘My’; another could be taken between ‘say,’ and ‘Would’ to again, separate narrative and quote. The editorial
tempo is circa 50 beats to a minute and the approximate length of performance time is one minute, 15 seconds.
“It never looks like Summer”

“It never looks like summer”

“It never looks like summer here
On Beeny by the sea.”
But though she saw its look as drear,
Summer it seemed to me.

It never looks like summer now
Whatever weather’s there;
But ah, it cannot anyhow,
On Beeny or elsewhere!

Boscastle
March 8, 191356

The poem was first published in *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses* in November of 1917. It is Hardy’s largest collection of poetry comprised of some 159 works, most of which were written after 1914. “It never looks like summer” is one of the few exceptions, dated March 8, 1913. A great many of these poems concentrate on the relationship and experiences with his first wife Emma. This particular poem was written after Hardy traveled to Cornwall to visit the scenes of his courtship with her just shortly after her death; the first line is a quote of hers, when they were on Beeny cliff on a rainy day in August of 1870.57

“It never looks like Summer” was one of the last pieces that Finzi wrote, his sketches were torn in half and discarded and only rescued after his death (see Figure 2). Finzi had a tendency to read lines of Hardy’s poetry and instantly have a melodic idea. In this way he would collect small snippets of pieces. He had done this very thing when he

56 Hardy. 477.
57 Bailey. 400.
first read this particular Hardy work and revisited it decades later. Joy wrote in February 1956:

On reading ‘It never looks like summer here’ [Gerald] instantly set it. A little one but beautiful… Later this evening: ‘It’s extraordinary how the mind works – quite extraordinary.’ On looking through old musical notes he came on a page with sketches for the first line of ‘It never looks like summer here’. When this first line sprang instantaneously to music on reading it this afternoon, it was quite unknown to him that he had previously worked at it over 25 years ago. The line written today had the same shape and fall as the previous germ and was obviously the completed idea after 20 odd years. ‘If one doesn’t live long enough one can’t complete the hundreds of musical lines waiting final shape.’  

Figure 2. “It never looks like Summer” manuscript

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59 Banfield, Gerald Finzi: An English Composer, insert.
It is the shortest song in the set, lasting only fourteen measures. There are two clear sections, which follow the two stanzas of the poem. In regards to form, the two sections could be seen as A-B or A-A\textsuperscript{1}. I will discount those who would side with the latter. While the same falling melodic motive is present at the beginning of both verses, there is little else to link the two together, melodically or harmonically. It is written in common time and remains in this time signature throughout the piece. The texture, aside from the piano part mainly in measure 5, remains sparse and moves in eighth note rhythmical units, with a shift to half notes in measure 11. We begin the piece in d minor, with an impure half cadence on the third beat of measure 2: V\textsuperscript{7} of d minor is an A dominant 7 chord. The second verse, like the song before it in the set, obscures the tonal center and although for some time it seems that we might be in b-flat minor—the third beat of measure 11 to the first beat of measure 12 would be a iv to i cadence, very British in its own right—but then the piece ends on an F Major chord, which would be the dominant of B-flat minor.

Finzi’s word setting is noteworthy here. The rhythms indicated on words such as ‘summer’, ‘weather’s’, and ‘anyhow’ follow speech inflection perfectly (see Example 5). The piece achieves a sense of unity from the falling motive found in the piano in measures 1, 7, and 13 and in the voice in measures 3 and 8. The movement of the vocal line is somewhat disjunct, except for the ascending pattern in measures 5 and 6, during which Finzi effectively increases the energy and intensity through upward motion in the voice and downward motion in the bass of the piano, and heightened rhythmic movement. The end of the piece and its abrupt halt in measure 11 underscores well the feeling that with the loss of Emma, regardless of the fact that their marriage had
deteriorated years prior, it won’t feel like summer, the season or symbolic apex of being, ever again in Beeny or anywhere else.

Example 5. “It never looks like Summer”, measures 9-10

This song presents very few difficulties. It has the smallest range of any in the set and has no time variation: c to f¹, and the tessitura remains almost in the baritone realm. It would perhaps be difficult for a young singer to achieve success on the rising sixth to an f¹ if sung at a dynamic level of piano, as indicated in the keyboard line. The singer should crescendo with the piano through measures 5 and 6, but it would be advisable to avoid any accelerando; Finzi has made this unnecessary with the movement from eighth note to sixteenth note patterns. The tempo is indicated as Andante with circa 63 beats to a minute and there is an estimated performance time of 50 seconds.
“At a lunar eclipse”

At a lunar eclipse

Thy shadow, Earth, from Pole to Central Sea
Now steals along upon the Moon’s meek shine
In even monochrome and curving line
Of imperturbable serenity.

How shall I link such sun-cast symmetry
With the torn troubled form I know as thine,
That profile, placid as a brow divine,
With continents of moil and misery?

And can immense Mortality but throw
So small a shade, and Heaven’s high human scheme
Be hemmed within the coasts yon arc implies?

Is such the stellar gauge of earthly show,
Nation at war with nation, brains that teem,
Heroes, and women fairer than the skies?60

“At a lunar eclipse”, in the style of a Milton sonnet, was first published in
November of 1901 in the collection of poems, *Poems of the Past and Present*, from
which Finzi also used “A spot”. We know only that it was written in 186-. The eclipse
that Hardy is referring to occurred either July 18, 1860,61 or March 31 or September 24,
1866.62 It is immensely dense in subject matter and philosophy, and commented on a
common thread in many of Hardy’s works: in this vast universe of ‘imperturbable
serenity’, what is the importance of an infinitesimal world, regardless of ‘nation [being]
at war with nation’? In the grand scheme of things, is it, and are we, of any
consequence? At the earliest, Hardy would have been only 20 years old when he

60 Hardy. 105.
61 Bailey. 142.
62 Seymour-Smith. 285.
witnessed the eclipse and it had such a profound effect on him that it shaped his entire worldview.

Finzi’s setting is appropriately profound, intricate, and unorthodox and was written in 1929. Many make the assertion that is was inspired by Holst’s tone poem *Egdon Heath*, written two years earlier and also the equivalent in *Till Earth Outwears* of “The comet at Yell’ham” in *A Young Man’s Exhortation*.\(^\text{63}\) It employs a Purcellian air-over-ground that is also a fugue. The trudging bass evokes the slow progress of the Earth’s shadow across the ‘moon’s meek shine’. It is without time signature and is unbarred. The quarter note motion is almost constant throughout the entirety of the piece, save a slight cadential spot preceding ‘And can immense mortality’.

There is a fugal introduction in the bass octaves, then the alto voice, and finally in the vocal entrance (see Example 6). This motive is the chief unifying aspect of the piece, as harmony, while mostly consonant and lacking in chromaticism, is more of a support structure. It is written in two sharps, D Major, but there are forays into G Major as well, with C-naturals becoming commonplace at the end of the first stanza. The piece ends, interestingly enough, on a B Major triad, only furthering the amorphous harmonic content.

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\(^\text{63}\) Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) Century*, 298.
Example 6. “At a lunar eclipse”, first score

This subject is found in stretto twice during the piece (see Example 7) and is the make-up of the beginning of the first, third, and fourth stanzas. The form of the piece, while through-composed and without many places of arrival, could be broken into four parts, corresponding to the four sonnet stanzas, in the following way: A-B-A\textsuperscript{1}-A\textsuperscript{2}. Each stanza comprises just one melodic thought and the vocal motion is extremely consonant and primarily step-wise. Banfield makes the assertion that, while the constant bass motion is at first a thrilling and somber effect, it soon becomes turgid and clogged. I would say Carlisle is more correct in saying that Finzi was able to overcome what could have become banal, especially considering a text where the question is more important than the answer, through his affinity for melodic shape and beauty and an upward moving, frequently present motive.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{64} Carlisle. 71-72.
Example 7. “At a lunar eclipse”, third score and sixth score

“At a lunar eclipse” is by far the most difficult of the seven pieces in *Till Earth Outwears*, rivaled by few others that Finzi wrote. The subject matter is profound and difficult to grasp and the lack of time signature or barlines can lead to confusion. The tessitura of the piece is exceedingly high, and the first stanza invariably lies within the area of the tenor passaggio. Little dynamic indication is present, but the singer would be smart to achieve a diminished volume at serenity at the end of the first stanza. Otherwise, indications in the keyboard part are a good guide, as well as general contour dynamics. A constant, albeit slight, crescendo throughout the entire last stanza, as opposed to just the final few lines, may heighten the dramatic nature of the text at this point. ‘Nation at war’ must also be declamatory and sung observing the tenuto markings. The marked tempo is circa 63 beat to the minute. This tempo is exceptionally slow, especially considering the tessitura, and, in everyone’s best interest, could be slightly more brisk. The estimated time of performance is three minutes, 25 seconds.
“Life laughs onward”

Rambling I looked for an old abode
Where, years back, one had lived I knew;
Its site a dwelling duly showed,
    But it was new.

I went where, not so long ago,
The sod had riven two breasts asunder;
Daisies throve gaily there, as though
    No grave were under.

I walked along a terrace where
Loud children gamboled in the sun;
The figure that had once sat there
    Was missed by none.

Life laughed and moved on unsubdued,
I saw that old succumbed to Young;
’Twas well. My too regretful mood
    Died on my tongue.65

“Life laughs onward” was included in the selection of poems entitled *Moments of Vision*. It was written shortly after the death of Emma and seems to have many references to her, as the ‘figure that once sat there’ and ‘grave’ where daisies grow gaily—they were apparently her favorite flower.66 The new and young will perpetually replace the old, but Hardy doesn’t seem to mind, as his ‘regretful mood’ soon passes. He was seventy-seven when this set of poems was first published. *C’est la vie*; and it goes on.

Finzi’s setting of the text dates from his last spurt of composition and was finished sometime in March of 1955. Joy Finzi wrote in her journal:

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65 Hardy. 435.
66 Bailey. 367.
[Life laughs onward is] the first song he has written for some time... a good sign and one which so often happens when he is wrestling with urgent other work. (17-18 March 1955). 67

The piece can easily be compared to the first two of the set, “Let me enjoy the Earth” and “In Years defaced”, seeing as all three share some common characteristics that so well define Finzi’s best vocal writing. They vocal phrases are frequently short and angular, the musical sections are small and distinct, while chromaticism is not a definitive feature, it is used to enhance text, and meter changes are frequent to allow for the best possible text setting.

The song is written in G Major and begins in common time, but this varies frequently throughout the piece, changing to 3/4, 5/4, and, in one case, 6/4 in order to best render the text naturally. There are four distinct sections to the piece, corresponding to the four stanzas of poetry. There is little thematic material that is used to cohere the piece, aside from the rhythmic pattern at the onset of the vocal line, and the ‘rambling’ staccati of the left hand (see Example 8). The vocal fragment is found again in the piano in measure 8, the voice in measure 9, and the interlude before the final stanza in measures 19 and 20. Harmonically, the piece shifts from G Major in the first section, to the dominant D Major for the second, beginning at measure 9. The piano part in measure 10 is extremely evocative of the text, with the contrary motion between the hands perfectly conjuring an image of being ‘riven’. The third section, picking up to measure 14, is the one in which Finzi achieves the highest range of the piece, with a high g on ‘loud’. The present loud children evoke a outburst of energy, only for the phrase to become more introverted as Hardy remembers his love ‘that once sat there’. It ends in E Major.

Finzi shifts the tonal center down a half-step at the beginning of the fourth section, and at ‘Life laughed’, it seems to be in D-flat Major. However, in measure 24, ‘Young’ falls on a D Major chord, which would be the dominant of G Major, ending in that very key.

Example 8. “Life laughs onward”, measures 1-3 and 8-9

The piece isn’t without criticism. It does contain two whole measures (21-22) of that ‘bane of English songwriting’. Yet it is still a work deservedly highly regarded. Finzi gave it considerably more attention when indicating dynamics in the vocal line and changes in tempo. All these should be observed. I would add that it would be permissible, even welcome, to take measures 24 and 25 slightly out of tempo. It is unaccompanied and the singer could employ some artistic license. The recommended starting tempo is Andante commodo with circa 60 beats per minute to the quarter note. There is an estimated performance time of one minute, 45 seconds.
CONCLUSION

The writing of Gerald Finzi has too long been ignored or discounted. He chose to write in what was soon after his death seen as too conservative and simple a musical language, especially after the growing popularity of the prodigy of the next generation, Benjamin Britten. His traits include chorale-like writing in the piano line, melodic and rhythmic structure that closely adheres to the text, and a conservative harmonic language that tends to eschew modulation. It is time, however, for his works to be more closely examined. His compositional style is unique and his own; perhaps with more formal training he would have lost this most important quality. His philosophy and means of writing are almost wholly indebted to the thought in England at the turn of the century: a British Renaissance of appreciating and studying music of the time of Purcell, Dowland and before, and to a national mindset during the two World Wars which occurred in his lifetime and the nationalism that ensued. His affinity for setting the works of Thomas Hardy is no doubt a reflection of this, as well. It is my hope that this document, in addition to being a great asset for someone who has decided to perform *Till Earth Outwears*, will be of great use in learning more about the life of a talented and eccentric man and the British culture that shaped his philosophy in regards to music and life. As Finzi said in *Absalom’s Place*, his works catalogue:

Yet I like to think that in each generation may be found a few responsive minds, and for them I shd [should] still like the work to be available. To shake hands with a good friend over the centuries is a pleasant thing, and the affection which an individual may retain after his departure is perhaps the only thing which guarantees and ultimate life to his work.
Those responsive minds have remained throughout the many generations since his death and hopefully will continue to recognize the great value in his output, allowing us to shake hands over centuries to come.
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