Music and the Epic Meta-Category: Case Studies from the Long Twentieth Century

By Rachel Lewzey
Candidate for DPhil in Musicology
St. Anne's College

Acknowledgements

My biggest thanks go to my supervisor, Professor Daniel Grimley, for embracing such a gigantic, complex, and unconventional (some may even say foolhardy) project. Thank you also for putting up with my constant scribbling, endless questions, and self-doubt for nearly five years. Our discussions have been immeasurably valuable and enjoyable, and it has been a great privilege to work with you.

I wish to also thank Professor Eric Clarke, Professor Jonathan Cross, Sebastian Wedler, and Timothy Coombes for their very helpful feedback at transfer and confirmation stages.

Finally, I owe the most enormous debt to my parents, Keith and Jenny, for their unwavering support (in many different areas) for my entire life, but especially during the last five years. I hope I make you proud.

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Abstract

The last few decades have seen a dramatic rise in uses of the term 'epic' in vernacular discourse, regarding increasingly varied subject matter including music. As a noun, 'epic' is assumed to be a genre or tradition; as an adjective, it seems to be little more than a marker of great scale, elevated status, or high value. These uses have often been at odds with definitions found in academic criticism, but this is beginning to change in more recent scholarship. This thesis reimagines 'epic' as a meta-category that has been and continues to be shaped by a diverse array of media and theoretical concepts. Although musicology's use of 'epic' has been limited, I argue that the discipline and meta-category have a reciprocal relationship. By examining case studies by Sibelius, Mahler, Vaughan Williams, and Howard Shore, this thesis considers how music can affirm, subvert, and critique seemingly conventional aspects of the epic meta-category. Focusing on the long twentieth-century, a period characterised by substantial shifts in definitional ideas around the meta-category, this thesis draws on recent re-evaluations of epic to embrace its inherent ambiguity and reflect its usefulness for musicological study. Each case study presents a different type of interaction between music and media more commonly invoked in discourse on the epic, namely literature and film, to offer a starting point for how music can participate in that same discussion. Going beyond merely asking whether a musical work "is" an epic, the conclusions drawn here are merely an initial suggestion of how music fits into and could provide greater understanding of this highly complex critical sphere.

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Chapter One: An Introduction to the Epic Meta-Category: Definitions and *Dramatis Personae*

Definitions

> Epic migration – birds do it, bees do it, even educated gastropods do it[1]
>
> The epic failure of our age: how the west let down Syria[2]
>
> In An Epic Twitter Thread, Miley Cyrus Denied Being Unfaithful To Liam Hemsworth In Their Marriage[3]

All too regularly, whether concerning a new film, a sports fixture, or brave servicemen, the popular press describes something as "epic", which is assumed to indicate an extraordinary quality or vast scale. Scholarship uses the term "epic" much less liberally and typically as a noun. However, both noun and adjective lack convincing modern-day definitions, having changed radically, so one cannot assume continuity of meaning between (often historically distant) uses. The definitional confusion only increases when considering epic's uses regarding different objects or media, including music. To understand how musicology might utilise "epic", a reassessment of the term's wider use is necessary.

Epic is not a genre, tradition or form. Epic is not just literary monuments like the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, nor is it anything simply large or impressive. Epic is not a singular

[1] Stephen Moss, 'Epic migration – birds do it, bees do it, even educated gastropods do it' *The Guardian*, published 19/05/2014, available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/19/migration-birds-bees-snail-whale, accessed 18/06/2020.
[2] Simon Tisdall, 'The epic failure of our age: how the west let down Syria' *The Guardian*, published 10/02/2018, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/10/epic-failure-of-our-age-how-west-failed-syria, accessed 18/06/2020.
[3] Michael Blackmon, 'In An Epic Twitter Thread, Miley Cyrus Denied Being Unfaithful To Liam Hemsworth In Their Marriage', *BuzzFeedNews*, published 22/08/2019, available at https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/michaelblackmon/miley-cyrus-twitter-liam-hemsworth-divorce-cheating-affair, accessed 18/06/2020.

construction, yet its multiplicity is not boundless. Rather, epic is best described as a meta-category, a web of connected ideas, elements, and concepts.[4] The meta-category's ambiguity means that works may (or may not) be epic, or may exhibit some epic qualities. As discourse on epic has diversified, we can no longer view the epic label in absolute terms: it is a spectrum of adherence to a set of ambiguous and unstable norms. The noun has long suggested a level of certainty in identifying a work as representative of the meta-category; the adjective implies a partial compliance with epic norms, but sufficient to support the association. Our understanding of the epic is in constant flux.

During this research, it has become abundantly clear that epic cannot be singularly defined. The *Oxford English Dictionary* has five separate definitions for "epic" as a noun and four as an adjective. The first noun definition is very much informed by traditional conceptions of epic as a poetic genre:

> A poem, typically derived from ancient oral tradition, which celebrates […] the achievements of one or more heroic characters of history or legend.[5]

Almost all of the following noun definitions use epic poetry as a reference point, framing poetry at the top of a hierarchy of epic objects (books, films, 'creative work', or events).[6] Similarly, the adjectival definitions begin with poetry – '[o]f or relating to the genre of poetic composition, […] designating this genre' – then widen to include

[4] The idea of a meta-category is not too dissimilar to Lydia Goehr's open and regulative concepts. However, I believe that an alternative term is needed to reflect how the epic combines many of Goehr's concept types and the fact that the epic defies long-term assumptions that it is a tangible object. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pg. 89-106.
[5] "epic, *n.* and *adj*." OED, Third Edition (March 2016), available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2360/view/Entry/63237?redirectedFrom=epic&, accessed 23/03/2020.
[6] Ibid.

other media.[7] The *OED*'s definitions emphasise the hero figure, a historical setting, struggle, scale, and ambition, with the latter two foregrounded in the final two adjectival definitions:

> Of a person, event, action, etc.: such as is described in epic poetry; suitable for the subject of an epic poem; characterized by heroic and arduous endeavour; grand in scale or ambition.
>
> *colloquial* (originally and chiefly *U.S.*). Particularly impressive or remarkable; excellent, outstanding.[8]

Labelling the latter definition as 'colloquial' reveals the assumed disparity between academic and vernacular understandings of "epic" as an adjective, with the latter too vague or impressionistic to function critically. Attributing the colloquial definition to the United States is also noteworthy beyond possibly reflecting initial uses of the term. Academic and popular discourses frame the U.S. as the centre of the entertainment industry, so the *OED* clearly links colloquial meanings of "epic" and popular culture.[9] Despite notable changes, the *OED* demonstrates that epic's original meanings (poetry detailing heroic achievements from a distant – possibly fictional – past) maintain a strong presence in current understandings of both noun and adjective.

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] For example, Richard Middleton and Peter Manuel focus their *Grove* article on 'Popular music' on the U.S. 'since 20th-century styles and practices originating in the USA […] have come to dominate popular music worldwide'. Similarly, Peter Tschmuck's article on the 'Music industry' also focuses on the U.S. as the dominant market for and distributor of recorded music and music industry practices. Richard Middleton and Peter Manuel, "Popular music" *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online,* Oxford University Press, available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2977/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043179?rskey=a12ZbG&result=1, accessed 30/03/2020. Peter Tschmuck, "Music industry" *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2977/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002262804?rskey=1MzUUr&result=13, accessed 30/03/2020.

The *OED* also outlines epic's etymology, which exposes the assumption that epics are always texted. "Epic" derives from the Greek word '*epos*' ('word, narrative, [or] song') and the Latin version '*epicus*', which is tied more specifically to epic poetry.[10] Both Greek and Latin terms are bound up with texted media and highlight epic's original oral, performative quality. Epic's performative aspect reveals its secondary function as entertainment, beyond recording history or myth. Adjectival uses of epic in other European languages appear from 1565, which suggests that viewing "epic" as a quality – and thus applying the term to non-texted media – is not merely a modern phenomenon.[11]

In 1971, Paul Merchant offered an early reassessment of previous definitions of epic as an elite group of literary texts (notably not specifying poetry), arguing instead that epic can also encompass non-literary texts.[12] Merchant's definition reflects many long-standing pre-conceptions about epic. Foremost is the notion that epic's tropes are textually contingent, so only texted media could be labelled as epic. Also, Merchant's definition acknowledges epic's long critical history, with two possible categorisations starting to diverge. The more recent version reflects the conflicting impulses in modern epics, simultaneously attempting to democratise aspects of the epic and retain its elite status and thematic content. Recognising that the epic continues 'developing and expanding', Merchant's definition foreshadows the *OED*'s emphasis on epic's relationship with the past and the persisting "elite type" narrative.[13]

[10] "epic, *n.* and *adj*." OED, Third Edition (March 2016).
[11] Ibid.
[12] Paul Merchant, *Epic* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1971), p. vii.
[13] Ibid, p. viii.

Writing contemporaneously with the *OED*, Paul Innes defines epic much more broadly, emphasising and actively legitimising the adjective's contemporary usage.[14] Innes describes the epic (noun) as:

> […] an identifiable literary form with a crucial cultural prominence. Its scope lends itself to grand narratives that incorporate various myths of origin intermingled with memories of historical events and personages.[15]

This definition mirrors the *OED* closely, highlighting its literary nature, "grand" scale and narrative function, and a fact-fiction tension. As an adjective, however, Innes and the *OED* differ:

> In popular usage, in a return to the communal roots of the term, 'epic' is an adjective that is applied to any grand sweeping narrative […]: film; television; the novel; role-playing and computer games, all have their own epic productions. Range, scope and sheer size define what can be described as epic. This element of ancient and classical epic has served to become its most significant defining feature.[16]

Crucially, Innes sees the adjective's vernacular usage and associations of grandeur, scale, and scope as historically rooted in oral and early written epics. However, by arguing that the adjective's associated qualities have come to define (even classical) epics, Innes boldly goes against the scholarly norm. Considering the uses of epic in vernacular discourse, as acknowledged by Joanna Paul, it is surprising that the academic world is only beginning to critically examine epic's adjectival usage.[17] By framing the adjective as representing some (or all) of the noun's qualities, Innes

[14] Innes's inclination to embrace epic as both noun and adjective is reflected in the title of his book – unlike Merchant, who specifically titles his book *The Epic*, Innes opts for simply *Epic.* Paul Innes, *Epic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).
[15] Ibid, p. 1.
[16] Ibid, p. 2-3.
[17] Joanna Paul, *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 2.

provides a solution to a persistent critical issue around epic. If the adjective's emphasis on scale and scope were given more weight in scholarship on the noun, it would offer criticism of epic greater historical continuity than features like the hero. However, Innes's conception of epic as an adjective has problems, most notably that categories besides epic have expansive scale and scope. Innes may have made the epic too broad.

These three perspectives – Merchant, the *OED*, and Innes – demonstrate changes to definitions of the epic meta-category in the last fifty years, but they nevertheless have some similarities.[18] To varying degrees, the emphasis on epic as texted or literary implies that epic depends on the relative objectivity of text to manifest particular tropes. Musicology's long-standing struggles with how music articulates its representational capabilities have excluded music from definitions of epic.[19] Of the texted media, poetry still occupies a privileged definitional position while prose is neglected (only Innes mentions the novel), a probable by-product of the common critical narrative that the epic "died" following Milton's *Paradise Lost*, around the time when prose rose in prominence.[20] The noun "epic" thus continues to have strong links to literary or texted media, but its adjectival counterpart is less explicit about its literary connections.

[18] The *OED*, Merchant, and Innes offer representative definitions of epic at notable stages of its critical history, but epic's definitional material is diverse and often contradictory. This chapter cannot do justice to the wealth of material available.

[19] Lawrence Kramer, for example, discusses the 'notorious subject' of music and representation in his work on music and postmodernism. He argues that, through a postmodernist lens, musical representation has 'significant, definite, interpretively rich ties to both musical processes and cultural processes'. Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 57-58.

[20] Despite recent challenges, this critical narrative retains some influence, as illustrated by these definitions. Paul Innes, *Epic*, p. 20.

Another common definitional aspect is the tension between fact and fiction, often expressed as a space between history and myth. Epics provoke amazement or high esteem when they lie simultaneously in the realms of possibility and the extraordinary. Too far into possibility and the action is commonplace; too extraordinary and the action is unbelievable. The fact-fiction tension is also manifest in the epic's spatio-temporal setting, typically invoking ancient or medieval civilisations with some basis in fact, but often augmented by fantastical elements. Setting epics in the past stems from the oral tradition's function of chronicling and monumentalising history. As epics convey the significance of their narrative, whether historical or fictional, very few epics, if any, are set or narrated in either the present or future.[21]

Definitions of epic, especially adjectival definitions, consistently invoke large scale and scope.[22] Although typically describing the length of the work and/or narrative, scale and scope extend beyond these surface parameters. For example, the epic's high cultural status reflects scale and scope (although high cultural status should not be confused with popularity: epics can seem intimidating to audiences). Notably, neither scale, scope, nor epic's high cultural value are the subject of a dedicated monograph; they are presumed to be present but rarely discussed critically. Crucially, scale and scope are significant elements in other genres related to epic, such as the vast, diverse

[21] Epics with science-fiction leanings may be the exception. Science-fiction has a complicated relationship with time, often being set in the future or at least a futuristic environment (typically indicated through technology), but have explicit connections to the past. The *Star Wars* saga is a useful example here, with its famous tagline: 'A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away…'.

[22] See: "epic", English Oxford Living Dictionary, available at https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/epic, accessed 06/09/2017. "Epic", Merriam-Webster, last updated 14/08/2017, available at https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epic, accessed 06/09/2017 [note that this source is one of the few to list the adjective definitions before the noun]. Ed. Jeremy Butterfield,*Fowler's Concise Dictionary of Modern English Usage, third edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), accessed online 11/10/2017.

fictional worlds found in fantasy, which is reflected in the critical literature. Scale and scope, then, must be dealt with cautiously.

Surprisingly, both Merchant's and Innes' definitions marginalise the hero, despite vast scholarship on the subject. Because its reach extends far beyond the meta-category, the hero's lack of definitional emphasis suggests that they cannot function as a primary identifier of epic.[23] In this thesis, the hero will be considered an important part of epic because the volume of scholarship on the hero warrants engagement and they facilitate exploration of epic's more meta-category-specific attributes. The hero usually lies at the centre of the quest; they often balance realistic and mythical, historical and fictional characteristics; they are trans-medial; they perform amazing or admirable feats; and they can reflect large scale and scope, perhaps most notably by moving through spatio-temporal parameters. As a complex character type, the hero merits particular critical attention.

For this thesis, conceiving of epic as a meta-category enables flexibility around older and newer definitions of the term, and equal critical appraisal and usage of both noun and adjective. "Meta-category" should be understood to mean an expansive, hierarchically organised category that contains, interacts with, or transcends many other categories and sub-categories. A meta-category is characterised by being both a means of regulation and demonstrating the inherent connections between categories. Epic's uses are too diverse to be labelled solely as a genre, tradition, form or other such term, and they have a significant, elevated cultural position, regardless of

[23] This is not to say that other aspects of epic are absent from in other literary categories, but rather that the hero is perhaps the most widely shared.

medium. Epics contain narratives that involve a quest, struggle, or obstacle to overcome, but are not exclusively defined by them. Unlike some definitions, however, I will avoid describing these narratives as "grand", because the phrase has another meaning in critical theory (particularly concerning postmodernism) that is best avoided here. Also, the concept of grandeur needs further unpicking.

Despite Adeline Johns-Putra's dismissal of defining epics by particular criteria, the meta-category has common features that offer a secondary definitional layer beyond the quest-driven narrative.[24] Not strictly necessary or often an ambiguous figure, a hero typically facilitates the narrative and acts as a locus for socio-cultural esteem. Large scale and scope are more common than even the hero, enhancing the narrative events' extraordinary nature and showing the artist's remarkable achievement. Similarly, epics have some extraordinary quality, or at least provoke amazement with no specific, identifiable source. Complex relationships between fact, fiction, history, and myth are also crucial for the epic, as both stem from the epic's preoccupation with its own history and heritage.

Despite definitional ambiguity, the noun and adjective versions of "epic" are remarkably similar. While often seemingly a colloquial synonym for "amazing" or "really large" (as acknowledged by Johns-Putra), the adjective can have critical use, indicating the qualities embodied by the noun.[25] Applying the adjective and noun warrants broader critical consideration: something can possess attributes of an epic (noun) without being considered an epic. Describing sports fixtures as "epic" does not

[24] Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 2.
[25] Discussions of the adjective elevate scale and scope because they are epic's most transparently trans-medial aspects. Ibid, p. 1.

claim that they *are* epics, but rather that aspects of them (such as an individual's "heroics" or the high quality of the match) are epic in nature. This is crucial for this thesis: works should not be classified as *either* epic *or* not, but rather seen as existing within a spectrum. This ambiguity enables us to consider music as a medium for expressing the epic meta-category. As Johns-Putra puts it, 'rather than searching for a single definition [… and] throwing up our hands in despair over the epic's apparent indeterminacy, we could attempt to engage with that very indeterminacy'.[26]

Using four case studies from the 1890s to the 2000s, this thesis examines how music has contributed to and been influenced by changing conceptions of 'epic' in both noun and adjective form. Adding music to the narrative will demonstrate how epic's indeterminacy reveals conflicting impulses of past and present that characterise the meta-category during the last century. Examining an indeterminate meta-category required the drawing of certain boundaries. Choosing the long twentieth-century was done to examine the critical characterisation of the period as containing the most radical changes to epic in its history, including media diversification and re-evaluation of the hero. For a similar reason, all of the case studies are post Wagnerian: examining Wagner's contribution to the epic meta-category would constitute an entire thesis itself. Seeing how Wagner's theories were implemented, challenged, or adapted is of greater interest here. Another necessary boundary is focusing on written epics rather than oral epics, which has meant the exclusion of ethnomusicological discourse on epic to ensure that the thesis has manageable boundaries.[27] The same applies to this project's theoretical and repertoire focus on the West, reflecting how uses of "epic"

[26] Ibid.
[27] Oral epics remain part of many cultures around the world, so are not merely a historical phenomenon.

have particularly diversified in English. Epic has a long history outside of the Western world – in fact, scholarship on the epic are seemingly more likely to discuss non-Western texts alongside Western ones than scholarship on other varieties of literature – and their study alongside music would undoubtedly be of considerable interest and importance in fleshing out the meta-category concept.[28] However, this repertoire and research would take this thesis beyond its practical limits.

While this thesis began as an attempt to understand epic's increasing adjectival use, music's contribution to epic's shifting meaning became of greater interest. Defining and conceptualising epic is very much a "live" issue in the arts, but, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first such study in musicology. Conclusions drawn here contribute to increasing literature on the trans-medial epic, but are nonetheless a starting point, given the repertoire restrictions. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholarship on epic in the arts (especially film) has significantly increased for several reasons.[29] Claims by Constantine Santas, among others, that film increasingly best represents epic's qualities or ethos rather than literature merit attention.[30] The hero concept and epic's cross-genre links also experienced significant shifts in the last couple of centuries. Similarly, the mid-twentieth century critical narrative that epic is irrelevant for modern society is now being challenged by demonstrating how epic has

[28] The literature on epics from around the world is vast, but two texts that deal with Western and non-Western epics in the same volume are: Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford, *Epic traditions in the contemporary world: the poetics of community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Robert Burgoyne, *The epic film in world culture* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[29] Melnic Vlad suggests that both academia and popular culture are experiencing a 'postmodern fascination with epic'. Melnic Vlad, "The Remediation of the Epic in Digital Games: The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim" *American, British and Canadian Studies Journal*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2018), p. 157.

[30] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2008), p. 20-22.

changed to suit modern concerns.[31] Rarely labelled "epic", music has only recently entered these discussions, most typically as an accompaniment to an epic film or video game. This assumption needs interrogating, especially as some music that appears to fulfil that function has gained a level of commercial and conceptual independence from their "epic" paratexts (John Williams's score to *Star Wars* (1977) is one example, as Peter Larsen claims).[32] Music's ill-defined relationship with epic generates uncertainty around whether music can be "an epic" without an epic paratext, or even bestow epic status upon a paratext. Only ethnomusicological discourse has thus far considered this possibility. This thesis only begins examining epic-music connections in musicology; future surveys of other musics are necessary for theorising the relationship. Opera, in particular, would offer useful discussions around spectacle, scale, and heroic figures, all key elements of epics.

Epic as meta-category

Understanding epic as both noun and adjective first requires discussion about what epic actually *is* and why scholars have used particular terminology to attempt to give epic a more "fixed" definition. Scholarship has referred to epic as a genre, tradition, style, mode, trend, template, function, quality, dimension, form, tone, product, construct, concept, phenomenon, and collection of archetypes, but genre and tradition are by far the most common. Labels like genre and tradition are unsuitable mainly because they invoke the idea that epics conform to a fixed set of criteria, giving no allowance for any ambiguity.

[31] See: Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 155. Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. xiv. Robert Auty, A.T. Hatto, and J.B. Hainsworth, *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry: Volume 2 – Characteristics and Techniques* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1989), p. 265.
[32] Peter Larsen, *Film Music* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2005), p. 172.

Genre is the most common term used to describe epic, largely owing to the long-standing assumption that epic is purely literary.[33] "Genre" encourages the meeting of certain criteria to merit the "epic" label.[34] Genre can also be trans-medial, in spite of differing terminology and application within disciplines.[35] However, as Stephen C. Meyer argues, late-twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship has framed the epic genre in a way that could arguably apply to nearly all films, and possibly other media too.[36] Similarly, the concept of genre has been increasingly criticised for being too prescriptive where rigidity is absent: very few works fit neatly into genres, which themselves often share "defining" criteria, as argued by Theodore Steinberg.[37] Epic shares elements with myth, legend, saga, science-fiction, fantasy, folk tale, fairy tale, and tragedy (among others – these will be collectively referred to as epic's "related genres", for lack of a better term). This is why Catherine Bates has suggested that non-literary epics simply show 'the perpetuation of epic motifs' instead of *being* epics, characterising particular features rather than whole works as embodying a single

[33] Scholars who define 'epic' as a genre include: Paul Innes, *Epic*. Ed. Stephen Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). Ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Ed. R.P. Draper, *The Epic: Developments in Criticism* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1990). Paul Merchant, *The Epic*. Dean A. Miller, *The epic hero* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). Ed. Andrew B.R. Elliott, *The Return of the Epic Film: Genre, Aesthetics and History in the Twenty-first Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

[34] This conception of genre has been challenged, particularly in light of postmodernism. However, it is worth framing in this way here initially because that understanding of genre has informed much of the literature that refers to epic as a genre. David Scott Kastan's definition of genre offers a useful summary of discussions around the concept and its main criticisms in the twenty-first century. "Genre" in ed. David Scott Kastan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), accessed online 04/07/2020.

[35] For example, in musicology, 'genre' has multiple uses, including forms (symphonies, sonatas), and broader groupings of works based on ensemble or function (such as orchestral, film, and choral musics).

[36] Stephen C. Meyer, "Introduction" in ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*, p. 17.

[37] Theodore Louis Steinberg, *Twentieth-Century Epic Novels* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 19-21.

genre.[38] While preferable to conventional labelling of epic as genre, the motif idea remains a criteria-based system, when epic has a long-standing tendency to subvert its own norms (even the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have contrasting takes on epic "norms"). Despite its merits, genre is too contentious a category under which to classify epic.

After genre, tradition is the next most popular label for epic in existing scholarship.[39] Associated with history and heritage, tradition alludes to epic's longevity and its self-awareness of following previous works. Tradition is not medium-specific, which allows discussion of films or video games on the same terms as Greek poetry, although this invites accusations of being too broad. However, "tradition" implies continuity throughout epic's history, which ignores its inter-genre borrowing and self-subversion tendencies. Differentiating the epic tradition from other literary traditions is difficult and still relies upon a generic label, thus invoking the problems of genre in the very process of trying to avoid them.[40] While "tradition" suits epic's most prominent features, it relies, as many literary concepts do, on an understanding of genre to function.

No ideal label for epic exists among those already proposed because epic transcends all of these categories. As both noun and adjective, epic extends beyond content to shape notions of history, national or cultural identity, and other socio-political

[38] Catherine Bates, "Preface" in ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, p. ix.
[39] Scholars who define 'epic' as a tradition include: Allison Lori Hersch, *Transgressive intent: The postmodern epic and the subversion of generic form*, doctoral dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1993. Constantine Santas, *The Epic Film: from myth to blockbuster*. M.A. Di Cesare, "'Not Less but More Heroic': The Epic Task and the Renaissance Hero" *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 12, Heroes and the Heroic Special Number (1982), pp. 58-71. Janice Carole Simpson, *George Eliot and the Epic Tradition*, doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1989.
[40] This is a common problem in literary criticism –misgivings about the concept and labelling of genre have not prevented generic terminology from persisting.

concerns.[41] "Meta-category" thus provides a solution, recognising the epic's chameleonic character and not enforcing artificial criteria. As Jasper Griffin argues, acknowledging epic's complexity reflects its importance in developing a diverse range of other genres, traditions, or styles.[42] Viewing epic as a meta-category allows it to act as a sphere of ideas, concepts, and images without fixed boundaries, allowing assumed components of epic to evolve without being deemed "no longer epic". Epic has normative procedures or elements that have existed in some form throughout much of its history, but these are not in the prescriptive manner of a genre. As Paul Innes says, 'there is no such thing as 'epic', simply stated: it is always and inevitably imbricated in […] assumptions about the cultural capital of the Western classics'.[43]

The epic meta-category in non-literary media

Framing epic as a meta-category situates this thesis on one side of the critical debate around whether non-literary (or even non-poetic) works can merit the label of "epic". Until late-twentieth century theorisations of epic film, the dominant view maintained that epics were literary artefacts.[44] However, with renewed interest in epics in the early twenty-first century, increasing numbers of scholars are arguing that epics can exist in multiple media, highlighting film and, to a lesser extent, novels and video games.[45] The functions and agendas of different media influence their engagement

[41] Other categories have this wider role, but epics have been among the most influential in undertaking this work. Some works have even been retrospectively re-labelled as epics because of their in extra-narrative influence.
[42] Jasper Griffin, "Greek epic" in ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, p. 14.
[43] Paul Innes, *Epic*, p. 37.
[44] R.P. Draper's edited volume, *The Epic: Developments in Criticism*, illustrates this point. Almost all of the texts (dating from the 1600s to the late 1900s) refer to the epic as poetry or otherwise texted or written. Published in 1990, there are no hints of the filmic or non-literary epics that will enter scholarly discourse in the next decade. Ed. R.P. Draper, *The Epic: Developments in Criticism*.
[45] See: Ed. Andrew Elliott, *The Return of the Epic Film*. Melnic Vlad, "The Remediation of the Epic in Digital Games". William K. Ferrell, *Literature and Film as Modern Mythology* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000).

with the epic meta-category, which is particularly significant for epic's relationship with commercialism, a recent critical addition discussed predominantly regarding film and video games.

Of those non-literary media discussed, epic film has received the most attention, which has shaped two broad critical narratives highlighting aspects that are de-emphasised in literary epics. The first focuses on the "historical" epic, set in ancient or medieval civilisations, which had production and popularity peaks in the so-called "golden age" in the 1950s-60s and early 2000s.[46] The second narrative characterises the modern blockbuster or franchise as both epic film and film on an epic scale, emphasising epic's commercialisation and dependency on particular film industry mechanics (especially initial investment and innovative technologies).[47] Epic film embodies a tension between the modernity of the cinematic medium and 'a completely nostalgic embrace' of epic's distant past, most notably medieval or ancient imagery.[48] Modernist or postmodernist literary epic features are often lacking in filmic epics, despite their contemporaneous development. However, filmic epics can also present (nostalgic) ancient or traditional aspects of epic through the lens of modern social norms and values.[49] For example, the hero figure may be an "everyman", but their quest involves challenges with ancient origins, such as fighting monsters. Film studies also

[46] Key texts include: Joanna Paul, *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition*. Ed. Stephen Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*. Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*.
[47] Key texts include: Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*. Mark A. Graves and F. Bruce Engle, *Blockbusters: a reference guide to film genres* (London: Greenwood Press, 2006). Steve Neale and Sheldon Hall, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010).
[48] Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 191.
[49] Adeline Johns-Putra uses *Gladiator* (2000) as an example of a film that combines nostalgia for a coherent past with modern political concerns. Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 212. Constantine Santas, James M. Wilson, Maria Colavito, and Djoymi Baker, *The Encyclopedia of Epic Films* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), p. 8-13.

problematises genre, comparing epic films to genres including fantasy, science-fiction, action, and superhero film.

Increasingly recognised as presenting epic narratives, scholars like Constantine Santas have argued that film has taken on the "epic mantle", assuming the role as the dominant medium for twentieth and twenty-first century epics.[50] Existing film studies literature provides support for this claim: epic film has greater commercial value than literary epics; the cultivation of film "stars" is a modern form of hero-worship; and epic film replicates many of the literary epic's normative elements, including the hero's journey and grand scale.[51] However, epic film's adoption of the epic mantle can be a misleading narrative, suggesting that, akin to the (false) narrative of epic's "death" after *Paradise Lost*, the production of literary epics has significantly declined or even "died" again.[52] New epic films have assumed a higher socio-cultural profile than new epic literature, as Santas notes.[53] Scholarship on literary epics still vastly outweighs that on filmic epics (even considering cinema's comparatively short history), but much of that focuses on pre-Milton epics. This lack of critical attention on newer media reflects the epic meta-category's uneasy relationship with modernity.

Discussions of epic music, by contrast, are few and far between, and invariably discuss music that features in another epic medium, typically film or (occasionally) video

[50] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 20-22. Joanna Paul, *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition*, p. 25. Paul Innes, *Epic*, p. 21.
[51] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 11-12+18. Stephen C. Meyer, *Epic Sound: Music in Post-War Hollywood Biblical Films* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), p. 1. William K. Ferrell, *Literature and Film as Modern Mythology*, p. 21-22.
[52] For examples or critiques of that argument around *Paradise Lost*, see: Dustin Griffin, "Milton and the Decline of Epic in the Eighteenth Century" *New Literary History*, vol. 14, no. 1, Problems of Literary Theory (1982), p. 144-146. Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 155+171+191-192.
[53] Constantine Santas, James M. Wilson, Maria Colavito, and Djoymi Baker, *The Encyclopedia of Epic Films*, p. 9-11.

games.[54] The suggestion that music can be a standalone epic is virtually non-existent. Almost all of the paratexts discussed fit either the "historical" epic category (see above) or a fantasy, mythical aesthetic.[55] Scholarship to date, then, presents two key assumptions about music's relationship with epic. Firstly, music enhances or contributes to epic qualities rather than embodies them. And secondly, music is best suited to accompany epics related either to the distant past or fantasy realms, which are characterised by inaccessibility. These assumptions have also plagued epic film and other non-literary media, and continue to shape our understanding of both the epic meta-category and what epic music could be.

Epic's related genres

Characterising the epic as a meta-category reflects its hybridisation and borrowing from other genre categories. Epic, myth, legend, saga, fantasy, science-fiction, folk tale, and fairy tale encompass a web of shared and adapted images, themes, and concepts, problematising critical distinction between these generic categories. As Dimitra Fimi suggests regarding fantasy, function is more useful than content for determining epic's relationships with its related genres.[56] The following paragraphs discuss the function and content of epic's related genres, but these highly complex literary categories should not be reduced to mere criteria. However, for the purpose of this thesis, outlining the constituent elements of these categories is a necessary evil.

[54] Stephen C. Meyer is the most prolific voice on music in the context of epic film. Most literature on music in epic video game exists in graduate-level dissertations. Stephen C. Meyer, *Epic Sound: Music in Post-War Hollywood Biblical Films*. Ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*. Melnic Vlad, "The Remediation of the Epic in Digital Games". Xavier Derrick Werlé, *The Music of World of Warcraft: Lore of Epic Music*, doctoral dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2014.
[55] "Historical" epics *Troy* (2004), *Gladiator* (2000), or *Ben-Hur* (1959), and video games like *Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader* (2003) and *Assassin's Creed* (2008). Fantasy/mythical epics include *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) and *Narnia* franchise (2005-2010), and video games like the *Elder Scrolls* franchise (1994-present).
[56] Dimitra Fimi, "Tolkien and the Fantasy Tradition" in ed. Claire Whitehead, *Critical Insights: The Fantastic* (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2013), p. 58.

Widely considered the oldest literary form, myth lays different emphasis on themes or narratives shared with epic. Myth's archetypal narratives (for example, 'the origin […or] end of the world') are all set in a "deep", inaccessible past.[57] As a result, audiences question whether the narrative is based on truth, 'false', as Robert Segal notes, or somewhere in between.[58] Frequently, the divine's interference among humans encourages the audience's questioning, as it feels alien to modern Western society. The divine may offer moral guidance, but their control over mortals means that they are 'understood as existing apart from ordinary human experience'.[59] Conversely, the divine in epic plays a more passive role. As myths typically foreground (not necessarily adopt) the divine's perspective, myth has acquired the status as the "highest" art form, providing both "universal" truths and highlighting the human imagination's limits when confronted with "mythical" beings.

Discussions of legend and saga tend to centre on setting and action. Legends are localised versions of myths set between Ancient Rome and the Renaissance; sagas are linked specifically to Icelandic history.[60] Legend and saga glorify the deeds of mortals,

[57] Being set in the distant past also does not invoke the nation construct. Clyde Kluckhohn, "Recurrent Themes in Myths and Mythmaking" *Daedalus*, vol. 88, no. 2, Myth and Mythmaking (1959), p. 268+273. David Leeming, *The World of Myth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 21. Kees W. Bolle and Richard G.A. Buxton, "myth" Britannica Academic, accessed online https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4663/levels/collegiate/article/myth/108748, accessed 09/11/2018.

[58] Robert Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction (second edition)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 3-5. Kees W. Bolle and Richard G.A. Buxton, "myth" Britannica Academic.

[59] Of course, this depends on accepting the problematic idea of "universal" truths and narratives. Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth*, p. xiv-xv. Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories: fantasy and the remaking of myth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 4. Kees W. Bolle and Richard G.A. Buxton, "myth" Britannica Academic.

[60] See: J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" in ed. Christopher Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), p. 123. Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories*, p. 35. "legend", Britannica Academic, accessed online at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4663/levels/collegiate/article/legend/47634, accessed 11/11/2018. 'saga, *n.*[1,], Oxford English Dictionary, second edition (1989), accessed online http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/169714?rskey=wojZ5o&result=1#eid, accessed 09/11/2018.

particularly those involving battles or other physical pursuits, which encouraged vernacular use of "legend" to describe individuals, rather than narratives.[61] Saga has also acquired new vernacular meaning, describing a series of tales (for example, the *Star Wars* trilogies are often labelled the 'Skywalker Saga', referencing the narrative centrality of the Skywalker family).[62] These vernacular meanings highlight what differentiates legend and saga from epic: the former glorify repeated heroics for a specific people, while epic has a single quest with far-reaching consequences. Additionally, legends and sagas rarely share epic's educational or moralising aspect.

Like legend and saga, folk tales (as Stith Thompson describes) are localised narratives that actively shape communities (originally transmitted orally), and teach important lessons.[63] Folk tales blur fact and fiction, occasionally invoking the supernatural or fantastical, and use archetypal characters, like the wise old woman. However, folk tales differ from epic because they frequently lack a hero, being about 'ordinary people', have wide-ranging subject matter, and often lack the necessary length for a quest narrative.[64] Folk tales provide audiences snapshots of regional history, rather than an individual's wider importance.

Fairy tales, closely related to both folk tales and fantasy, tell 'familiar' narratives of archetypal figures and simple lessons, inevitably following the "happily ever after"

[61] For older definitions of 'legend', see: Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of criticism: four essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 51. Lowell Edmunds, "Epic and Myth" in ed. John Miles Foley, *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 31. 'legend, *n.*', Oxford English Dictionary, third edition (March 2016), accessed online http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/107040?rskey=wwcVaG&result=1#eid, accessed 09/11/2018.
[62] For example: Ani Bundel, "Is The Skywalker Saga Really Over? 'Star Wars' Fans Aren't Convinced" *Elite Daily*, published 23/12/2019, available at https://www.elitedaily.com/p/is-the-skywalker-saga-really-over-star-wars-fans-arent-convinced-19627570, accessed 14/06/2020. Paul Innes, *Epic*, ibid, p. 74.
[63] Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 4-5.
[64] Lowell Edmunds, "Epic and Myth", p. 31.

trope.[65] Characters are 'marvellous', framed simplistically as good (princesses, princes, fairies) or evil ("pantomime" villains).[66] Similarly, fairy tales' dependence on well-used narrative tropes ("once upon a time", a faraway kingdom) encouraged assumptions that fairy tales are designed for and best consumed by children, as J.R.R. Tolkien observes, but these formulae have specific functions.[67] A sub-category of fantasy, fairy tales provide space for the mythical, fantastical, or otherworldly to operate 'with no rational explanation'.[68] While elements of fairy tales can be realistic, magical events or objects are deemed extraordinary by the narrative's characters, encouraging the audience to react similarly, or imagine, as Tolkien puts it.[69] Fairy tale appears to have few immediate similarities to epic, but it is a highly self-conscious form of storytelling, a quality not found in many of epic's related genres.

Perhaps exerting the greatest influence on contemporary understandings of epic, fantasy has a complicated past and scholarly history.[70] The very term "fantasy" has attracted scrutiny, whether defined as a distinct entity or an umbrella category encompassing "the fantastic", "magic realism", "the supernatural", and "the uncanny". Typically, fantasy is characterised as a narrative set in an imaginary world that claims to be realistic (but not necessarily real) history.[71] Different types of fantasy involve

[65] Andrew Teverson, *Fairy tale* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 56+59-60.
[66] "fairy tale (fairy story)" in Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, fourth edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2518/view/10.1093/acref/9780198715443.001.0001/acref-9780198715443-e-445?rskey=pGMWhK&result=1, accessed 21/07/2020.
[67] J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories", p. 129.
[68] Andrew Teverson, *Fairy tale*, ibid, p. 55.
[69] J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories", p. 138-139. James Walters, *Fantasy Film: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2011), p. 17.
[70] Fantasy's history will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on Howard Shore's score for *The Lord of the Rings*.
[71] Eds. Dinah Birch and Katy Hooper, *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature (4th edition)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), accessed online at http://ezproxy-

different levels of interaction with the "real" world (for example, as Farah Mendlesohn describes, the "portal fantasy" protagonist enters the fantasy world through a "real" world entrance point).[72] James Walters is one of many scholars who argue that familiar elements, often based on "real world" history, provide a framework to comprehend fantastical aspects, allowing fantasy to interrogate the differences between or challenge audience preconceptions about real and unreal.[73] To function correctly, fantasy must convince audiences that the events or circumstances are real, often called "willing suspension of disbelief", which Tolkien has discussed in great detail.[74] By consistently invoking the realistic-fantastic duality, fantasy has a complex relationship with the Self-Other binary.[75] While fantasy offers a safe space to confront real-world issues, it can exacerbate or rely on existing "real-world" Othering to present in-narrative Others.[76] Epic and fantasy have so many similarities – the central quest, an archetypal hero, a balance of real and fantastical, a complex relationship with history – that the term "epic fantasy" has been coined for those fantasies with an epic

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prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2232/view/10.1093/acref/9780199608218.001.0001/acref-9780199608218-e-2688?rskey=Erc5ey&result=1, accessed 11/11/2018.

[72] Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), p. xiv.

[73] Hence the number of fantasies inspired by medieval/Middle Ages Europe, such as George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones*. Eds. Dinah Birch and Katy Hooper, *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, p. xiii. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 4+19+35. James Walters, *Fantasy Film: A Critical Introduction*, p. 45.

[74] J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories", p. 132.

[75] Rosemary Jackson argues that fantasy refuses to observe the rigidity of the Self-Other binary. While possible, the fact that the binary is altered in fantasy can provide commentary on how it plays out in the "real" world. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, p. 1. James Walters, *Fantasy Film: A Critical Introduction*, p. 28-30.

[76] An example of the latter, in the *Harry Potter* series, the werewolf Remus Lupin experiences prejudice for his "condition" (a thinly-disguised synonym for "disability"). Although a sympathetic "good" character, "good" and "evil" characters alike treat Lupin with suspicion, which illustrates how "real-world" Othering finds its way into fantasy. For more on "Othering" in fantasy and its relationship to the "real" world, see: Eds. Dinah Birch and Katy Hooper, *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, "fantasy (phantasy)" *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), accessed online at http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2232/view/10.1093/acref/9780199587261.001.0001/acref-9780199587261-e-0260?rskey=JsTD7R&result=1, accessed 11/11/2018. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, p. 4+8.

dimension.[77] That dimension is the epic's monumentalising function (within the narrative and culture more broadly) that much fantasy lacks.

Science-fiction, like fairy tale, may seem distant from epic. Typically set in the future (or alternative present) and associated with futuristic imagery (space travel, extraterrestrial creatures, technology), Pantelis Michelakis notes how science-fiction relies upon long-standing narrative and structural tropes, especially the quest.[78] For Michelakis, science-fiction is a variety of fantasy, combining past and potential future elements to fashion new epic narratives.[79] Nevertheless, science-fiction occasionally highlights links to the past by invoking aspects of pre-Renaissance or 'mythological' culture.[80] By retaining links to the "real", as Richard Mathews notes, science-fiction can warn humanity about the possible consequences of particular practices from an imagined future, like epic provides important historical lessons.[81]

Beyond those genres that share thematic content (a narrative set in a world occupying an ambiguous spatio-temporal position in relation to the "real world"), epic also has notable connections to tragedy.[82] Typically, the hero is the locus of similarities between tragedy and epic, facilitating the narrative, maintaining a 'high sense of honour', and struggling with conflicting impulses.[83] Similarly, both hero types witness

[77] "Epic fantasy" is used as part of a definition of 'fantasy film' by: Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, "fantasy film", *A Dictionary of Film Studies*.
[78] Katherine A. Fowkes, *The Fantasy Film* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010), p. 2. Pantelis Michelakis, "The Future of Epic in Cinema" in eds. Fiona Macintosh, Justine McConnell, Stephen Harrison, and Claire Kenward, *Epic Performances from the Middle Ages into the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 124.
[79] Pantelis Michelakis, "The Future of Epic in Cinema", p. 124.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 4.
[82] For this thesis, 'tragedy' refers to ancient and Shakespearean varieties, the most commonly invoked regarding epic's tragic elements.
[83] Adrian Poole, *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 37+46.

the often bittersweet (according to Blair Hoxby) impact of their actions on their community.[84] However, tragedy's importance for epic also lies in its very long history: as Helen Lovatt argues, they evolved alongside each other, characterised variously as either closely related or oppositional.[85] Time, scale, and scope suggest opposition: tragedies typically involve shorter time spans (often a single day, as Hoxby observes) and take place within a single community or locale.[86] Contrasting with epic's monumentalising approach, tragedy acts as a cautionary tale, emphasising how the hero's flaws cultivate particular circumstances, yet their attempts to rectify the 'inevitable' backfire.[87] Arguably, tragedy presents the epic hero's story "gone wrong". Tragedy and epic emphasise different aspects of a simple narrative model of trying to solve a problem, while epic also highlights expansive temporality and the importance of struggle for triumph. Thus, tragedy and epic are neither at opposing ends of a spectrum nor totally differentiated categories: their relationship is characterised by constant flux and permeable boundaries.

Understanding how epic's related genres contribute to its chameleonic character cannot be fully presented here, especially given the problems surrounding genre and the difficulty (or usefulness) of labelling "definitive" examples. Like epic, labels for other genres are undergoing definitional changes – myth, for example, is increasingly synonymous with fictitious or 'false', as Robert Segal puts it – so the characteristics outlined here are, to a certain extent, historically contingent.[88] Similarly, scholarship

[84] Blair Hoxby, *What Was Tragedy?: Theory and the Early Modern Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 4.
[85] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze: Vision, Gender and Narrative in Ancient Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 6+224+232.
[86] Blair Hoxby, *What Was Tragedy?*, p. 61.
[87] Ibid, p. 16-18. Adrian Poole, *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 24+34-35+ 51.
[88] Robert Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 5.

on generic categories is terminologically inconsistent; for instance, myth, legend, and saga are sometimes used interchangeably.[89] Characterising these related genres also risks hierarchical organisation based on assumed audiences and cultural value, typically placing epic and myth near the top.[90] Nevertheless, examining epic's related genres is important because epic has never existed in isolation and frequently borrowed from other literary categories.[91] Highly self-conscious of its cultural prestige, epic intentionally adopts and produces 'endless variations' upon aspects of other genres to expand its scope.[92] Epic and related genres are in a dynamic relationship that questions whether their differentiation is artificial.

Epic's fact-fiction tension, shared with other genres, raises the question of whether epics can depict real-life events, as some epics reputedly did happen (such as the Trojan War in the *Iliad*).[93] In vernacular discourse, "epic" and "hero" increasingly describe real-life events and figures.[94] Vernacular descriptions of the hero frequently use real-life figures as examples, both contemporary and historical, contrasting with

[89] For example: Christopher Booker, *The seven basic plots: why we tell stories* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 35.
[90] For example: Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of criticism*, p. 33-34.
[91] For example, Hal Colebatch claims that *Star Wars* (1977) is not an epic because its alleged innovations can be considered merely borrowings from other genres or works. Hal G.P. Colebatch, *Return of the Heroes:* The Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Harry Potter, *and Social Conflict (second edition)* (Christchurch, New Zealand: Cybereditions Corporations, 2003), p. 127.
[92] Clyde Kluckhohn, "Recurrent Themes in Myths and Mythmaking", p. 278. Line Henriksen, *Ambition and Anxiety: Ezra Pound's* Cantos *and Derek Walcott's*Omeros *as Twentieth-Century Epics* (New York: Rodopi, 2006), p. xvii.
[93] When the terms "real life" or "history" are used here, these are based on common understandings of past events that are widely accepted as taking place, regardless of era. Robert Auty, A.T. Hatto, and J.B. Hainsworth, *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry: Volume 2 – Characteristics and Techniques*, p. 199.
[94] This *Lonely Planet* article illustrates this idea: each of the ten profiled people on allegedly "epic" travels around the world offers a very different image of what a "real-life" epic journey might be. The first subject, Andrew Parker, is flying a hot air balloon around the world to promote charitable causes: his journey is potentially dangerous, of considerable scope and scale, goes beyond "normal" travel, and has a goal. In contrast, the second subject, Michelle Liu, takes amusing photos at famous landmarks for her social media channels. Andrea Smith, "10 people who went on epic journeys around the world in 2017" *Lonely Planet*, published 29/12/2017, available at https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/10-people-epic-journeys-2017, accessed 15/06/2020.

normative academic views of epic heroes coming from the "distant past" (out of the collective cultural living memory).[95] However, highlighting the "distant past" may merely be symptomatic of epic's need for time. Playing out over long periods, epics are typically set in the past because the events must have already played out to be monumentalised, which makes present-day "real-life" heroes or narratives unlikely candidates for epics. For "real-life" events, a distinction needs to be made between an epic and a heroic act. An epic potentially involves multiple heroic acts; a heroic act is a one-off occurrence. "Real-life" events are rarely structured in the epic's quest narrative, so may be best described as heroic acts. It is not impossible for epics to reflect "real-life" history, but epic's structural norms and inherent fact-fiction tension make it difficult to label true stories as epics.

Among epic's connections to many genre categories, the most significant for this thesis are myth, fantasy, and tragedy, which, for this project, will be conceived of as follows. Fantasy and myth tend to follow a central quest, like epic, and blur the fact-fiction boundary. Fantasy emphasises belief in a fictitious universe, and myth foregrounds the relationship between divine and humanity. Tragedy explores the imperfect hero, but is not oppositional to epic. These genre categories are not organised hierarchically, including epic with its alleged high cultural value. They have all historically intersected each other, so it would be an oversimplification to deem epic the "parent" genre or more culturally valuable. Connections between these related categories are as dependent on perceived popularity as content and function.[96] Nevertheless, this thesis

[95] See: "100 great British heroes" BBC News, published 21/08/2002, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/2208671.stm, accessed 19/03/2020.

[96] For instance, expansive fictional worlds are more commonly seen as integral to fantasy than to epic, despite featuring in both categories, because the most widely-known fantasies employ that device (such as Tolkien's Middle-earth and C.S. Lewis's Narnia).

will claim that something displaying fantasy, mythic, tragic tropes or tendencies demonstrates that epic consciously interacts with a diverse range of influences and borrowings. What follows is discussion of some of epic's most widely used images, themes, and concepts, often shared by its related genres.

The hero

Though not strictly essential, the hero maintains a strong presence in epics and related scholarship. Negotiating the hero-epic relationship is highly complex as many hero types exist, and not exclusively in epics. In discourse on the epic, "hero" is preferred to "protagonist" (the most typical alternative term), which merits attention. The *OED* frames the hero as both performing extraordinary feats and being admired or idolized by others, whereas the protagonist is defined by their narrative function as the central character.[97] Arguably, heroes are a type of protagonist, usually being the central characters of epics. However, the lack of emphasis on the hero's narrative centrality means that hero and protagonist can be completely separate, which particularly applies to epics with multiple heroes or narrative threads, where *the* central character is hard to identify. Based on this paradoxical positioning with the protagonist, the hero has unsurprisingly been privileged in epic discourse as a kind of "epicised" protagonist (a protagonist with heightened narrative importance and extraordinary qualities). For this thesis, "hero" will be preferred over "protagonist", both following the scholarly norm and acknowledging the hero's wider socio-political significance.

[97] "hero, n." OED, third edition, March 2014, available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2360/view/Entry/86297?rskey=fn0bqR&result=1#eid, accessed 12/02/2020. "protagonist, n." OED, third edition, June 2007, available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2360/view/Entry/153105?redirectedFrom=protagonist#eid, accessed 12/02/2020.

In the wider scholarship on the hero, two dominant categorisation systems – temporal and generic – have emerged. Both systems are worth exploring, for they shed light on how the hero can operate as both feature and determinant of epic.

Although labelled differently, temporal discussions of the hero tend to centre around three periods or incarnations of the heroic figure: in ancient civilisations (Greece and Rome); from the Middle Ages until Romanticism; and the Romantic and modern hero. Figure 1 presents a broad description of each category.

	Hero in ancient civilisations	Hero from Middle Ages to Romanticism	Romantic and modern hero
Physical traits	Tall, handsome, strong, male Often has semi-divine powers	Echoing the ancient hero physique, but increasing diversity	No sense of normative physique
Personality or behavioural traits	Loyal, especially to community Strong desire for honour, occasionally reckless in pursuit Somewhat self-absorbed	Concept of chivalry Maybe some undesirable qualities e.g. arrogance or selfishness	Frequently includes undesirable qualities
Quest traits	Usually involves combat, violence, often a "glorious" death that leads to honour Rewarded with bride or reuniting with wife	Usually involves combat, but also increasingly mental struggle Death can be more tragic Triumph can be bittersweet	Quest often only affects the hero Often mentally-based Death is usually tragic, often before the quest ends
Relationship with others	Strong communal links Often in a powerful or leadership position Often related to the divine	More complex relationship with community, sometimes involving self-isolation or exile Reduced connection to the divine	Typically isolated from the community Rarely a divine connection
Example	Achilles (the *Iliad*)	Sir Gawain (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*)	Jean Val Jean (Victor Hugo's *Les Misèrables*)

Figure 1: The temporal model of the hero.[98]

[98] These characteristics have been collated from various key texts on the hero and epic including: Catherine Bates (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*. D.C. Feeney, "Epic Hero and Epic Fable" *Comparative Literature*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1926), pp. 137-158. M.A. Di Cesare, "'Not Less but More Heroic': The Epic Task and the Renaissance Hero", pp. 58-71. R.P. Draper (ed.), *The Epic: Developments in Criticism*. Dean A. Miller, *The epic hero*. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces, third edition* (Novato: New World Library, 2008). Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*. Northrop Frye,

As much as it over-simplifies the hero's characteristics within each temporal period, this model shows that each subsequent period has gradually moved away from the ancient ideal. Recognising that the hero is not a static concept is a recent, newly accepted but crucial critical narrative: this is why the 'newly complicated view' of the hero cannot be reliably used as a criterion of epic.[99] The malleability of the hero problematises framing epic as a mere set of archetypes; as Janice Simpson says, epic meditates on the heroic ideal, rather than builds on it.[100]

Categorisation by genre offers an alternative model for the hero. However, the seemingly endless "generic types" vary between disciplines, so understanding how these types interact, adapt, and differ is almost impossible. Figure 2 details some of the more commonly discussed types; crucially, they are not mutually exclusive (for example, King Arthur fits both "epic" and "national" types):

Anatomy of criticism. Hal G. P. Colebatch, *Return of the Heroes*. Simon Williams, *Wagner and the Romantic Hero* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For a full list, see bibliography.

[99] Dean A. Miller, *The epic hero*, p. 1-3. Hal G.P. Colebatch, *Return of the Heroes*, p. 9-12.

[100] Janice Carole Simpson, *George Eliot and the Epic Tradition*, doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1989, p. 12.

Hero type	Character traits	Narrative traits	Example[101]
Epic	Heroism beyond "normal" bounds Struggles with temptation Completes quest for their community	Quest is of near-universal importance Hero's journey shapes structure	Beowulf (*Beowulf*)
Tragic	Fatal flaw or weakness Downfall does not reflect morality	Quest ends in failure Centrality of fate/destiny Disturbs "natural balance"	Hamlet (Shakespeare's *Hamlet*)
Romantic	Introspective, melancholy, sometimes rebellious, self-critical, isolated Individual prioritised over social conventions and expectations	Can involve rejections of ideas or actions, which the hero later regrets Usually a solitary existence Often follows wanderlust	Faust (Goethe's *Faust*)
Fantasy	Often an "everyman", does not self-identify as a hero Can be a chivalric persona	Typically encounters a monster or supernatural being Often involves a prophecy	Frodo Baggins (J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*)
Mythological	Strong connection to and interaction with the divine	Often performs a task for the divine Normative mythical narratives (creation, journey to the underworld)	Hercules (Greek mythology)
Byronic	Courteous, strong sense of honour Neither wholly "good" nor "evil", inconsistent character	Often undertake a journey/pilgrimage	Childe Harold (Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*)
National	Embodies the nation's defining traits	Heroic acts undertaken to benefit the nation	King Arthur (Arthurian legends)

[101] These examples are not necessarily from epics: these hero categories extend across a multitude of literary categories. Literary categories do not necessarily feature the hero type that shares the category name. For example, an epic does not have to include an epic hero, nor does the tragic hero only feature in tragedy.

Anti	Heroic despite "un-heroic" qualities, like arrogance or selfishness – not consciously assuming the heroic mantle Self-evaluates ironically	Actions performed for the wrong reasons Narratives are often ironic	Dean Moriarty (Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*)

Figure 2: Generic classification of the hero.[102]

These two categorisation systems are best understood in conjunction, rather than as opposing and incompatible. The epic and epic hero dynamically shape one another and affect other genre categories and hero types. No genre is wholly restricted to a defined temporal period, although some are more historically determined than others (notably Romantic and national). In fact, some types, notably the anti-hero, have longer histories than traditionally thought despite close associations with particular temporal eras (the twentieth century for the anti-hero). Viewing heroes solely in generic or temporal terms will never accurately depict the hero's diversity throughout its history. Even heroes in near-contemporaneous works, like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* as Gregory Hagy notes, lack continuity.[103] Time and genre are not just modes of categorisation, but competing impulses that have encouraged the hero to develop in particular ways, so using both critically is preferable.

In spite of their differences, there are three points of continuity between hero types throughout cultural history. Firstly, the hero must undergo a quest, trial, struggle, or test, the nature of which can vary widely. The quest pursues improvement to the hero's world, whether reasserting a normative order, overthrowing oppression, or

[102] See footnote for Figure 1.
[103] Gregory Hagy, "The Epic Hero" in ed. John Miles Foley, *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, p. 71.

silencing an internal critic. Typically, the hero alone can undertake the quest, even if they do not know why. Secondly, the hero must have a connection with a community. Frequently, the community motivates or inspires the hero, but more modern heroes are increasingly isolated from their communities. The fact that this isolation is articulated, however, demonstrates that the hero and community are inextricably connected and partly depend on one another for self-determination. And, thirdly, the hero must have an extraordinary characteristic or quality that aids their quest. Some heroes have superhuman or magical powers; others are simply wealthy, orphaned, or particularly empathetic. Having a single extraordinary quality does not make the hero extraordinary: it simply enables them to undertake the quest. Crucially, this trait is deemed extraordinary *within the context of the narrative*, not necessarily within the audience's world.[104] As these points of continuity define the hero in other fiction besides epics, epic heroes are heightened versions. For example, Aragorn (from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*) begins the trilogy as a "normal" hero, serving his community (the Fellowship) and contributing to the quest. However, he becomes an epic hero by embracing his role as heir to the Gondorian throne, engaging with his realm's past (the Army of the Dead) in order to battle present foes, surpassing the feats and status of his previous heroic role.

Defining heroes by what they facilitate, rather than what they are, offers an alternative to traditional categorisation methods. As discussed by Richard Mathews, Tolkien was an early advocate of the idea that heroes are not "born" heroic, but created by

[104] For example, the legends of King Arthur tell of how he was bestowed the right to rule by pulling a sword from a stone, which seems almost ridiculous by contemporary wisdom, but is accepted in a legendary world.

opposing an adversary, renouncing any claim to the power that the adversary seeks.[105] This argument particularly suits seemingly disparate examples of epic, de-emphasising the importance of genre or historical contingency that plagues scholarly attempts to define epic. Mathews notes how Tolkien suggested that the hero is not an active player, but a reactionary figure engaged in the continual "good versus evil" struggle, which exceeds the scope of individual epics.[106] D.C. Feeney develops this idea by claiming that epics are not *about* the hero, but rather the hero is a key player in a narrative about a subject greater than mankind.[107] Through their schematic presentation, however, the audience knows that the hero will typically triumph. John Freccero argues that heroes are never seriously threatened because they are labelled as heroes, but in fact, heroes' power and status come from overcoming threats that *are* serious, otherwise they would be ordinary humans with everyday difficulties.[108] Dean Miller suggests that definitions of the hero should be based on the idea of a persona or behaviour rather than a person: circumstances prompt heroic action, rather than heroism being an inherent characteristic.[109] A familiar term in film studies, inherited from psychoanalytic theory, a persona is 'a public role acted out by an individual in relation to social expectations'.[110] A heroic persona is thus a performative role responding to expectations of heroism, rather than *being* a hero. The persona-person distinction implies that the hero is not born, but a set of characteristics that a person adopts. However, framing the hero as a persona ignores the fact that epics

[105] Tolkien's view was prompted by specific historical circumstances, namely his experiences in the First World War and understanding of colonialism. Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, p. 64+90.
[106] Ibid, p. 62-64.
[107] D.C. Feeney, "Epic Hero and Epic Fable", p. 143.
[108] John Freccero, "Dante and the epic of transcendence" in ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, p. 76.
[109] Dean A. Miller, *The epic hero*, p. 1-2.
[110] Daniel Chandler and Rod Munday, *A Dictionary of Media and Communication, first edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), accessed 05/07/2020.

(particularly ancient and medieval works) often present heroes as born, usually invoking ideas of fate and destiny.

As an alternative, Clyde Kluckhohn proposes that the hero is better understood through the application of heroic motifs.[111] Examples include the hero's unusual birth circumstances, close relationship with animals, the homecoming, a close hero-mother relationship, earning a special weapon, a forbidden love affair or a hidden identity.[112] By motif, Kluckhohn describes a distinguishing aspect of the hero's personality or circumstances that does not necessarily facilitate the quest narrative or provides a sub-plot element.[113] While Kluckhohn's idea has some value, the model is unclear about what makes these motifs particularly heroic and privileges epics with limited emphasis on realism. Replacing multiple hero models with a single model and host of heroic motifs is too reductive for the historical diversity of heroes.

Northrop Frye's famous literary "modes" remains an influential model for discussing heroes and heroic ideals.[114] When mapping modes onto hero types, Frye references only one or two distinguishing characteristics, unlike more detailed models. For the mythical mode, the hero is a quasi-divine being, whether through parentage or their achievements.[115] Romance heroes are mostly connected with the specific places or peoples of legend or folk tale.[116] High mimetic mode heroes (including in epic) are leaders, between god and mortal, while low mimetic mode heroes are typically

[111] Clyde Kluckhohn, "Recurrent Themes in Myth and Mythmaking", p. 277.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Aragorn in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* provides an example of these motifs "in action". Aragorn's main heroic deeds come in battle, but he has other narrative threads (reclaiming a lost throne, his relationship with Arwen) connected to the central plot but are nevertheless not the central aim.
[114] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of criticism*, p. 33-65.
[115] Ibid, p. 33.
[116] Ibid.

"everyman" figures, and ironic modes heroes are even more "inferior".[117] Frye's approach lessens the significance of historical era and genre, pointing to continuities rather than differences, which enables epic to exist within a collection of related styles. Frye's modes, however, are hierarchical, but reject epic's normative high rank, which makes his modes and existing scholarship on the epic difficult to reconcile.

Alongside heroes that correspond to his modes, Frye adds the tragic hero. He argues that the tragic hero disturbs the fictional world's balance of "nature", which does not reflect their moral status.[118] For Frye, only tragic heroes in leadership roles have exceptional qualities, but they are socially isolated, which encourages the inevitability of subsequent tragic events.[119] Tragic heroes have good intentions but ultimately make things worse, whereas epic heroes have good intentions and success. In this oppositional set-up, tragedy acts as an "Other" to the high mimetic hero. Regardless of historical era, the tragic hero is the type that most consistently fails, undergoing an incomplete, subversive "hero's journey". This actively counters the idea that heroes must succeed to merit their label, instead suggesting that only successful heroic actions can be celebrated or idolised. Tragic heroes, conversely, inspire pity even if they are the source of their own undoing because "hero" indicates potential greatness. Frye's discussion of the tragic hero acknowledges that his modes do not invoke homogenous conceptions of heroes, and questions the typical narrative of the hero's success.[120]

[117] Ibid, p. 33-34.
[118] Ibid, p. 38.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid, p. 37+49-50.

While Frye's modes can reflect the breadth and cross-genre tendencies of epic and its heroes, they do not indicate what the hero actually *does*. The social status of each mode's hero does not necessarily map onto their actions, so the "hero" label could be applied too liberally. For example, Frye's characterisation of high mimetic mode heroes as somewhere between god and mortal is unclear whether the hero is literally semi-divine or occupies a position of authority, as well as what the hero does with that power. If the latter, for example, characters performing "evil" deeds could feasibly be "heroes", which would force a radical re-evaluation of the assumption that heroes are admirable for doing "good". Similarly, Frye's modes do not convey the importance of the hero as a locus for admiration for the epic's cultural status. For the purposes of this thesis, then, Frye's modes are not the most suitable model, but are useful for understanding epic's interactions with related genres.

Our understanding of the hero in epic can be improved by tracing how and why the heroic ideal has changed, a subject of criticism in all generic categories. Even if the phrase is not explicitly stated, the heroic ideal can be loosely defined as an idealised hero figure that provides a theoretical point of comparison throughout history. As M. Gregory Kendrick argues, the heroic ideal has gradually transformed in response to previous material, contemporaneous events, and shifts in Western thinking regarding social behaviour and philosophy.[121] Privileged culturally and pedagogically, Greek and Roman epics provided the 'choices and assumptions' around the heroic ideal for centuries.[122] Usually described using behavioural or personality traits (like courage, combat skill, and a strong sense of honour), the classical heroic ideal also has narrative

[121] M. Gregory Kendrick, *The Heroic Ideal: Western Archetypes from the Greeks to the Present* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2010), p. 3.
[122] Richard P. Martin, "Epic as Genre" in ed. John Miles Foley, *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, p. 12.

and structural qualities. Joseph Campbell's "hero's journey", whereby the hero follows certain prescribed steps in accepting, undertaking, completing, and returning from their quest, is the most famous narrative and structural model for the classical heroic ideal.[123] As Leslie Goss Erickson claims, while 'many critics recognize patterns and archetypes from the heroic journey in classical and contemporary literature', Campbell's mythology-based model has not been applied methodically to epic, so some variations are inevitable, but demonstrates that the ancient heroic ideal was thematically and structurally formulaic.[124] The ancient heroic ideal acts as a metaphor for the human lifespan and societal values, an 'attempt to impose order' and emphasising the mortality (and humanity) of the hero.[125]

However, the ancient heroic ideal also inherits the oral epic's educational function. Hal Colebatch argues that heroes show audiences when and how to act (and any negative consequences) as aspirational role models despite their typically elite status.[126] Ancient societies followed different rules of normative social behaviour, so the ancient hero's predisposition towards violence and law-breaking was accepted as part of the struggle for the "greater good". Nevertheless, the feats of ancient heroes have overshadowed their more unsavoury characteristics and encouraged idolisation, fashioning an image of idealised humanity. This is partly why R.P. Draper has argued that a hero's deeds can only encourage idolisation if the hero is named.[127]

[123] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*.
[124] Leslie Goss Erickson, *The Search for Self: Everyday Heroes and an Integral Re-Visioning of the Heroic Journey in Postmodern Literature and Popular Culture*, doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2004, p. 6.
[125] Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 148. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of criticism*, p. 37
[126] Hal G. P. Colebatch, *Return of the Heroes*, p. 63.
[127] R.P. Draper, "Introduction" in ed. R.P. Draper, *The Epic: Developments in Criticism*, p. 14.

After idealised classical and chivalric Middle Ages heroes, the heroic ideal in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries responded to changing social structures (the 'cult of the common man') and the rise of realist literature.[128] Audiences' interest in relatable characters encouraged depictions of heroes as imperfect, the beginnings of the modern anti-hero. Heroes of pre-realist literature were accepted because audiences did not question their 'certain mystique' or extraordinary abilities.[129] Once realism became the new norm, 'images of human perfection' in the hero seemed artificial and misplaced, with rapidly decreasing belief in the supernatural.[130] Scepticism about the ancient heroic ideal encouraged the development of the mock-epic, which Claude Rawson describes as a parody of the epic, using comedy to disguise probing investigation into how past and (then) present incarnations of epic coincide.[131] Simon Williams traces scepticism about the ancient heroic ideal specifically to the French Revolution and rise of Napoleon, which prompted re-evaluation of the hero and their position within contemporary justice and political systems.[132] Lying between the alleged (and now much dismissed) post-Milton "death" of the epic and Hollywood's nostalgic revival of the ancient heroic ideal, loss of faith in the hero coincides with early realist literature and fewer (widely acknowledged) epics. The heroic ideal changed with ever-evolving societal practices to enable the production of new epics.

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[128] Peter L. Thorslev, *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), p. 193.
[129] Ibid, p. 193.
[130] Obviously, this is a significant over-simplification of the Western world's relationship with the supernatural and the otherworldly. Nevertheless, the point that science and realism changed literature still stands: while belief in otherworldly powers was taken for granted previously, post-realism fiction is often more self-conscious of the need to convince audiences to believe in such tropes. Simon Williams, *Wagner and the Romantic Hero*, p. 1.
[131] Claude Rawson, "Mock-heroic and English poetry" in ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, p. 167.
[132] Simon Williams, *Wagner and the Romantic Hero*, p. 5.

However, changes to the ancient heroic ideal began long before realism dominated Western literature. As M. Gregory Kendrick argues, the post-ancient hero image gradually began to include quests for personal excellence.[133] Until Milton, the hero was unambiguously "good" or completed tasks for the "greater good". Milton's *Paradise Lost*, however, subverted this formula: the hero, as such, is subject to a 'radical critique' according to Dustin Griffin, reinvented across two narrative threads as Satan and Adam, who consciously use their power(s) for evil purposes.[134] Milton embraced the idea that heroes did not have to be unambiguously "good", which ancient epics only hinted at (according to Helen Lovatt).[135] Crediting Milton for significant changes in the epic is a common critical claim (see Dustin Griffin, Joseph Crawford, and David Loewenstein), and, as Crawford argues, the cultural gap between Homer and pre-Milton epics did not encourage audiences to sympathise with heroes still constructed around the Homeric ideal.[136] However, *Paradise Lost* explicitly challenges the ancient heroic ideal, marking a turning point in the demonization of the hero in the centuries to come.

As recognised by Lilian Furst,, the hero's evolution accelerated during the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century.[137] Earlier demonization of the hero became democratisation of the Western heroic ideal, partly responding to shifting class perceptions (especially following the First World War), according to M. Gregory

[133] M. Gregory Kendrick, *The Heroic Ideal*, p. 6.
[134] Dustin Griffin, "Milton and the Decline of Epic in the Eighteenth Century", p. 150. Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories*, p. 26. "*Paradise Lost*" Wikipedia, available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise_Lost, accessed 15/02/2020.
[135] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 357.
[136] Dustin Griffin, "Milton and the Decline of Epic in the Eighteenth Century". Joseph Crawford, "Milton's Heirs: Epic Poetry in the 1790s" *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2010), p. 428. David Loewenstein, "The seventeenth-century Protestant English epic" in ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*.
[137] Lilian R. Furst, "The Romantic Hero, Or Is He An Anti-Hero?" *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1976), p. 53.

Kendrick.[138] Alongside wider social changes, the honouring of lower-class, non-officer soldiers for extraordinary feats contributed to the emergence of the "everyman" (or "little man", to use Dean A. Miller's term) hero.[139] A hero variety with none of the societal advantages of the Greek ideal (class, political or magical power, wealth, intelligence, or admirable physique), the "everyman" hero is 'able to distinguish themselves through extraordinary ability and/or action'.[140] The "everyman" hero reflects the continuing decline of hero-worship, increasingly viewing the inherited classical ideal as 'ultimately elitist, undemocratic, and dangerous'.[141] While the ideal Greek hero maintained order, the new heroic ideal inspired a fairer society, as C.M. Bowra notes, whereby pursuing the goal was heroic rather than the pursuer.[142] Heroism began to assume greater importance than individual heroes: a hero is no longer solely defined by performing heroic actions, nor are heroic actions only performed by heroes. Modern heroes' personalities are much more diverse, often insecure, self-doubting, and actively avoiding quests, unlike their confident, even arrogant, ancient counterparts, who recklessly chase adventure. The modern heroic persona is also further distanced from ideas of fate and destiny: ancient heroes were destined to perform heroic feats, whereas modern heroes are compelled by circumstance. The rapidly changing modern world has influenced understandings of what feats and figures are considered heroic, but has not wholly divorced from the ancient ideal.

[138] M. Gregory Kendrick, *The Heroic Ideal*, p. 105-106.
[139] Dean A. Miller, *The epic hero*, p. 24.
[140] M. Gregory Kendrick, *The Heroic Ideal*, p. 106.
[141] Ibid, p. 2-3.
[142] J.R.R. Tolkien's heroes, especially the hobbits Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, are indicative of this new heroic ideal. C.M. Bowra, "Some Characteristics of Literary Epic" in ed. R.P. Draper, *The Epic: Developments in Criticism*, p. 126.

Alongside the development of Hollywood film, the ancient heroic ideal has regained popularity. From the Greece- and Rome-based epics of the 1950s and 60s to the twenty-first century superhero revival, the male cinematic hero frequently recreates the physique, superhuman abilities, and unambiguously "good" quest of the ancient ideal. However, as Hal Colebatch argues, the modern film hero is 'pigeon-holed' as mere nostalgia, which ignores their complexity as amalgamations of ancient and modern ideals: they often have fatal flaws, undesirable personality traits, and sometimes fail.[143] Modern conceptions of the hero have been complicated by 'national feeling, […] new forms of art or old fits of nostalgia', and the turbulent socio-political landscape.[144] However, Leslie Erickson claims that the postmodern hero poses the biggest challenge to the ancient ideal, lacking a defined communal position and purpose (as postmodernism emphasises the individual) so that the hero is unsure of what they are being called to do and why.[145] The continued de-socialisation of the hero (stemming from the Romantic hero's self-isolation) affects the call to adventure (using Joseph Campbell's term). As their importance to and affect on their community is ambiguous, it is unclear why the postmodern hero is best placed to carry out the quest.[146] Despite challenges from the postmodern hero, the ancient ideal remains the focus of or reference point for scholarly discussions of the epic hero. However,

[143] Examples include: Indiana Jones's fear of snakes is his weakness; the titular hero's arrogance in *Thor* (2011), which must change to save Earth; and Luke Skywalker fails to defeat his enemies in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 13. Hal G.P. Colebatch, *Return of the Heroes*, p. 11.
[144] Dean A. Miller, *The epic hero*, p. 3.
[145] Leslie Goss Erickson, *The Search for Self*, p. 44.
[146] As Allison Lori Hersch says, the postmodern epic 'maintains no nostalgia for a romanticised past; it is neither seduced by the mystique of heroic ideals nor does it seek to aspire to those ideals', continuing epic's long-standing investment in 'subverting notions of heroic identity'. A useful example here is J.K. Rowling's titular hero in the *Harry Potter* series. Harry is isolated from by his student peers (being famous) and his Muggle relatives (being a wizard), and his task of defeating Voldemort, how to do it, and why it must be him is only made clear in the last three books of the series. Reflecting modernist tropes, Harry reluctantly assumes a heroic role, making huge sacrifices. Allison Lori Hersch, *Transgressive intent*, p. 29.

defining non-literary epics typically relies less on the hero than literary epics, which suggests that the increasingly complicated "heroic landscape" has focused the critical spotlight on other, more constant aspects of epic in the diverse, contemporary meta-category.

Naturally, this discussion of the hero concept cannot cover every proposed model or type, and assigning "type" labels is inevitably problematic, misleadingly suggesting rigidity when the hero is a highly fluid 'all-purpose rubric' at its extreme.[147] Non-literary presentations of the hero, in particular, have received less critical attention, especially regarding adaptation processes. Existing studies of epic film heroes (and the superhero sub-genre, which is increasingly gaining attention) tend to highlight the Greek/Roman ideal, with particular emphasis on the hero's physicality, but the hero is inconsistently labelled as epic.[148] Cinema's nostalgic presentations of the heroic ideal encourage questions about the epic's and epic hero's links with commercialism and the reasons for different changes to literature and film heroes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

While academic sources deal with the hero in considerable detail, vernacular uses of "hero" are less formally defined and more permeable than ever. A survey of vernacular sources is too ambitious for this thesis, but there are some common patterns that are

[147] M. Gregory Kendrick, *The Heroic Ideal*, p. 3-6.
[148] See: Hal G. P. Colebatch, *Return of the Heroes*. Robert Burgoyne, "Introduction" in ed. Robert Burgoyne, *The Epic Film in World Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 14.
Recent scholarship on the superhero includes: Sean Parson (ed.), *Superheroes and masculinity: unmasking the gender performance of heroism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020). Aldo J. Regalado, *Bending steel: modernity and the American superhero* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015). Alex S. Romagnoli, *Enter the superheroes: American values, culture, and the canon of superhero literature* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013).

well-illustrated by a 2002 BBC poll of 100 'great British heroes'.[149] Including 'The Unknown soldier', David Beckham, Jane Austen, Alan Turing, and Alfred the Great, popular heroes span real, fictional, contemporary, and historical figures, including sportspeople, scientists, royalty, authors, and "everyday" citizens.[150] Here, heroes are defined more by the fact that they are admired: their achievement must be deemed a significant moment in their field or an individual's perception of that field. Time and the quest narrative are de-emphasised as crucial elements of the hero. Similarly, a hero may fail or lose popularity during their lifetime, but their achievement remains elevated, usually through its scale or scope.[151] However, no universal vernacular conception of the hero exists. Fictional and real-life heroes are conflated and can give false impressions about one another. Additionally, as so-called academic and popular sources interact and overlap, separating the two could be creating a false divide. Popular sources also do not differentiate between heroes in epics and in other sources, typically deriving characterisations from "mainstream" Western society and culture. So, popular conceptions of epic will not carry significant critical weight in this thesis.

Although scholarship on the hero outweighs that of other elements of epic, it is worth remembering that epics need not have heroes at all as they are not the meta-category's primary determinant. Contrary to epic's moralising or pedagogical function, heroes can be unlikable, not admirable, or simply reluctant. For instance, anti-heroes are unwillingly thrust into scenarios where they must act like heroes, but do so for

[149] "100 great British heroes", BBC News.
[150] However, only 13 out of the 100 heroes are women, maintaining bias towards heroes being male. Ibid.
[151] Margaret Thatcher's presence on the BBC list demonstrates this idea: she is viewed by some as a hero for being the first female UK Prime Minister in spite of her controversial policies. Ibid.

selfish reasons, do not actively adopt a heroic persona, and experience 'a failure of self-realization'.[152] Anti-heroes can explicitly critique the ancient heroic ideal, providing a somewhat admirable but flawed character whose heroic acts make a work epic, rather than their narrative presence. However, the anti-hero is not an epic hero, as they can lack any of the three aforementioned points of continuity: they need not have a quest, instead performing one-off heroic acts; they are often solitary figures, actively seeking isolation from their community; and they are typically ill-suited to their task and unextraordinary within their narrative context. The anti-hero is a clear statement that traditional epic heroes are no longer necessary in the modern world.

Similar to the debates around the anti-hero, the hero-protagonist distinction can be blurred to suggest that the epic can lack a hero: a protagonist may undertake a quest but not fulfil other aspects of the hero. As an example, Princess Leia (the original *Star Wars* trilogy (1977-1983)) has elevated rank, a clear, long-term quest, and many heroic personality traits (leadership skills, bravery, determination). However, she lacks the extraordinary quality needed to defeat her adversary. Unlike her brother, Luke, Leia is not given the opportunity to train as a Jedi and thus merit the "hero" label.[153] Leia's heroic aspirations (or heroic persona) are denied by the narrative's invocation of fate: seemingly normative elements of epic can be used for unconventional purposes. Blurring hero and protagonist can show that the hero is increasingly an optional figure.

[152] Lilian R. Furst, "The Romantic Hero, Or Is He An Anti-Hero?", p. 58-59+67.
[153] *Star Wars* does have a hero (Luke Skywalker), but Leia is an example of the heroic figure. Leia *is* trained in the time between the original trilogy and the sequel trilogy, but other circumstances prevent her from fully becoming a 'hero', such as mourning her son turning to the Dark Side. Leia's transformation within and between these trilogies demonstrates that the hero, heroic figure and persona are not static. Certain circumstances encourage a particular role, while others inhibit the character's aspirations or actions.

Epics containing multiple narrative strands are more likely to lack a definitive epic hero, because the heroic figures in each strand are all necessary for the quest. Epic heroes and their quests dynamically shape one another, but real-life or multi-threaded events rarely follow the hero's journey model. In *War and Peace*, for instance, which is inspired by real-life events, identifying a single epic hero is difficult. As demonstrated by the untimely demise of Prince Andrei, the narrative often continues beyond the hero's lifetime. The recent de-centring of the hero suggests that the epic hero is increasingly unessential in epic narratives, playing more a formal role than a narrative one.[154]

Depictions of heroes and heroism in music are as difficult to summarise as literary or filmic portrayals, but one figure dominates the discourse: Beethoven. Scott Burnham's famous *Beethoven Hero* is a useful starting point, particularly because he considers works all along the absolute-programmatic spectrum on the same terms. From the outset, Burnham argues that the 'dramatic rhetoric' of the musical hero or heroism has both structural and narrative functions, as they are closely connected by temporal processes.[155] Like literary heroes, the musical hero acts as a catalyst for many (even all) of the following musical processes. By giving the hero a temporal dimension, Burnham defines the heroic style partly by the music's uncertain future.[156] Teleologically constructed, the heroic style's drama foregrounds the idea of progress, created by building to and subsiding from a climax.[157] Although assuming that all heroic quests are teleological, the centrality of progress mirrors the more recent heroic ideal of

[154] According to Adeline Johns-Putra, more recent epics, such as *Titanic* (1997), see 'the triumph of spectacle over heroism'. Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 210.
[155] Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 29.
[156] Ibid, p. 38.
[157] Ibid, p. 45.

continual self-improvement. Issues of agency, temporal experience, and action-reaction tension all characterise the Beethovenian heroic style, with continual thematic development occupying an elevated position.[158]

The Beethovenian hero also generates drama through tonal means. Tensions between tonal poles (most commonly tonic-dominant, tonic-relative major/minor and tonic-mediant or -submediant) and the gradual working towards a tonal resolution represent heroic struggle.[159] Using both tonal and temporal processes to manifest heroic struggle allows the listener to judge the hero's success or failure. Setting up a clear tonic "home" key with a narrative function invites interpretation as the "good" hero. Although Beethoven's tonal strategies are historically contingent, Burnham's wider point of setting up a collection of stable, "home" features replicates aspects of Campbell's "hero's journey", where the hero's quest is to reinstate previous order and concludes with a homecoming. The hero, then, is associated with both struggle and maintaining order.

Crucially, however, Burnham explores different approaches for works about specific heroes and works about heroism.[160] The hero exerts agency over musical processes or relies on an identifiable narrator (sometimes the composer), whereas heroism typically lacks embodiment in a specific subject. This distinction highlights the difficulty of navigating whether a hero is defined by more than courageous actions, as both non-heroic figures and music can appear "heroic" without being (or being about) heroes. Agency and narration can articulate the hero-heroism distinction: music can present

[158] Ibid, p. 45-46.
[159] Ibid, p. 39.
[160] Ibid, p. 30.

the character's or narrator's interpretation of whether the character is or is not a hero. Relying on the narrator is inevitable in any non-first-person narrative, regardless of media, but music's typically obscure narrator further complicates identifying the hero or heroic figure. While most texted epics have third-person narrators (following the epic's function of chronicling history), the narrative persona of music is less prescribed.[161] Meanwhile, music can express the qualities and tropes of heroism without depending on a narrative owing to its lack of subject. Works towards the "absolute" end of the absolute-programmatic spectrum are equally able to depict heroics, so a work need not depend on an identifiable hero or hero figure to be considered (an) epic. Burnham's hero-heroism distinction, then, opens up the possibility for further discourse on agency around the absolute-programmatic spectrum and questions inherited preconceptions of the hero figure.[162]

Film music offers an alternative vision of musical heroism. With backgrounds in European opera and melodrama, 1930s-40s Hollywood composers like Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold wrote scores 'steeped in a late nineteenth-century romanticism' and familiar operatic tropes (including leitmotif) to conjure images of "swashbuckling" heroes, nostalgically characterised as daring, chivalrous, and dashing.[163] In particular, the leitmotif has persisted in the film-scoring world. For instance, Irena Paulus claims that John Williams's score for *Star Wars* (1977) is clearly modelled on the Wagnerian leitmotif ideal, including a theme for the hero ("Luke's

[161] Also, third-person narratives vary in reliability and how conscious they are of the audience.
[162] While Edward Cone and Seth Monahan have both discussed agency in "absolute" music, the programmatic end of the spectrum lacks scholarly attention. See: Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). Seth Monahan, "Action and Agency Revisited" *Journal of Music Theory*, vol. 57, no. 2 (2013), pp. 321-371.
[163] Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 78-80.

Theme") that presents many heroic tropes recognised in earlier scores.[164] Williams described Luke's theme as idealistic and heroic, reflected by its major tonality, emphasis on the perfect fifth, optimistic ascending leaps, and typically brass scoring.[165] Scoring cinematic heroes with leitmotifs suggests a level of constancy in the hero's character, as the leitmotif remains recognisable throughout in spite of continual variation. Unlike modernity's emphasis on constant self-improvement, heroic leitmotifs nostalgically present the hero as destined for their role, experiencing only minor character development. In *Star Wars*, variations in Luke's leitmotif accompanying his first on-screen appearance (off-beat accompaniment and reduced brass) do not obscure its connection to the earlier bombastic opening title version: we know that this seemingly ordinary youth will become the hero. Heroic leitmotifs can indicate fate as opposed to struggle, presenting the hero as a more static character type than Burnham's discussion of musical heroism claims.

Given its complexity, there is no ideal way to discuss the hero concept. For the purposes of this thesis, the temporal categorisation of heroes will be more useful and relevant than the generic system for two main reasons. Firstly, the case studies discussed here were created within just over a century, so they provide a temporally specific examination of how the hero, epic, and music operated. Secondly, generic conception of the hero risks suggesting that epic is a genre. Viewing the hero and epic as distinct generic entities fails to acknowledge their chameleonic characters and long histories of stylistic borrowing. Generic hero categories will only be invoked when the case study shows distinct leanings towards another genre type. In this thesis, the hero

[164] Irena Paulus, ""Williams versus Wagner or an Attempt at Linking Musical Epics" *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2000), pg, 158.
[165] Craig L. Byrd, "The Star Wars Interview: John Williams" published in ed. Mervyn Cooke, *The Hollywood Film Music Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 240.

is viewed as a figure framed by three basic qualities – the quest or trial, communal links, and at least one extraordinary quality – with additional stipulations depending on the case study's specific context. Naturally, this strategy has its problems (being too broad, arguably privileging earlier heroic ideals), but it allows the flexibility that the hero concept has demanded over time. As this model can apply in many (narrative) categories, the epic hero should be understood as a heightened version. Their quest has greater significance than most; their connection with their community reflects the quest's demands; and their extraordinary quality exceeds "normal" extraordinary qualities.

Throughout this thesis, the terms "hero", "hero figure", and "heroic persona" have different purposes. "Hero" means hero: the character that occupies the role of the hero as unequivocally as possible. A "hero figure" is more ambiguous, claiming or aspiring to be a hero without necessarily fulfilling that function, both structurally and within the narrative world. "Heroic persona" describes characters that adopt elements of the hero's personality (self-assured, almost arrogant, enjoying the admiration of others), but eventually return to their normal character. "Heroic persona" and "hero figure" may seem similar, both presenting ways that a character fails to "be" a hero, but their difference is crucial. While the "figure" is a permanent state of aspiration, the "persona" is temporary (albeit often long-term) and can be combined with other manifestations of the hero. For example, both the "hero figure" and hero can assume a "heroic persona", which feels artificial or forced.[166] These three terms are all necessary

[166] Occasionally, and particularly in superhero films, the hero's ego can become over-inflated through idolisation, requiring a tragic incident to refocus the hero on the quest. This is because the heroic persona falsely believes that being a hero means being admired, rather than struggling for the benefit of others. This reverses the hero-community relationship: instead of the hero serving the community, the community serves the (egotistical) needs of the hero. As such, the heroic persona can be problematic or

to deal with the various manifestations of the hero, and the choice of labels will naturally depend on the individual case study. It is nevertheless highly likely that varieties of hero exist outside of these categories. The elite club of widely-accepted heroes may be small, but figures that show heroic tendencies are incredibly numerous and diverse. This thesis should begin to uncover the extent to which music relies on a hero, heroic figure, or heroic persona to present its epic status or aspirations in a period when the meta-category increasingly de-emphasised the hero.

The representation of women in epics

Throughout its long history, audiences and critics alike have gendered the epic as male.[167] Epics follow a patriarchal 'code', in Johns-Putra's words, detailing male heroes undergoing quests that involve traditionally masculine pursuits, like warfare and defeating monsters.[168] In contrast, epics traditionally sideline and confine women to a few gender-specific, narratively insignificant roles, typically only facilitating the hero's quest or providing an obstacle. Helpful female characters are deemed "good" and frequently idealised as the unattainable "perfect" woman or 'the contended object, the prize' (often a Virgin Mary allegory).[169] Those who hinder the hero are monstrous or mischievous and, as Lilah Canevaro, Sara Poor, and Jana Schulman note, are

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even dangerous. For example, in *The Dark Knight* (2008), Batman's neglect of Gotham leads to the rise of the Joker, the fall of Harvey Dent, and the deaths of thousands.

[167] The epic is gendered as male owing to its high art status, the inevitably male hero, and the fact that its most widely recognised canonic works (the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Paradise Lost*, among others) are all written by men. However, like musicological questions around whether women can write symphonies, it is not women's inability to write epics but rather Western patriarchal socio-cultural mechanics that have limited women's involvement in the meta-category. Notably, however, oral performances of epics have had and continue to have greater participation from women. For examples of critical acknowledgement of the gendering of the epic, see: Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 97. Jasper Griffin, "Greek epic", p. 19. Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman, "Introduction" in eds. Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman, *Women and Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 1.

[168] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 5. Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 32-34.

[169] Lilah Grace Canevaro, *Women of Substance in Homeric Epic: Objects, Gender, Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 55. Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin, "Gender and Homeric epic" in ed. Robert Fowler, *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 96.

positioned (sometimes spatially as well as metaphorically) outside of normal society or are otherwise "Othered".[170] Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin give as an example the Sirens in Greek mythology, who present a danger to any male who encounters them.[171] This help-hindrance duality demonstrates how women's roles in epics are typically (but not universally) framed in binaries with male or other female roles, often reflecting how expressions of female sexuality were aligned with a character's morality (such as the 'virgin or whore' binary).[172] Margaret Beissinger identifies four archetypal female roles – the wise helper, the hero's family members, otherworldly creatures (like fairies), and the victim – but other character types could augment the list (such as the "monstrous female", or the hero's "prize").[173] These roles typically position acceptable female characters in the domestic or private sphere (the "monstrous female", meanwhile, is an "unacceptable" expression of femininity). Even more contemporary epics retain the idea that women suit particular societal roles – normally set in the past (whether "distant" or otherwise), epics do not tend to replicate recent feminist progress. A few female characters wield some power, but typically do so within an acceptable feminine sphere. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings,* Galadriel offers the Fellowship advice and resources, following the wise woman or nurturing mother archetypes. However, she does not actively participate in the War of the Ring until her kingdom is threatened with invasion.

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[170] Lilah Grace Canevaro, *Women of Substance in Homeric Epic*, p. 67. Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman, "Introduction" in eds. Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman, *Women and Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity*, p. 5.

[171] Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin, "Gender and Homeric epic", p. 105.

[172] Patricia E. Sawin, "Lönnrot's Brainchildren: The Representation of Women in Finland's "Kalevala"" *Journal of Folklore Research*, vol. 25, no. 3, Special Issue: Feminist Revisions in Folklore Studies (1988), p. 188.

[173] Margaret Beissinger, "Epic, Gender, and Nationalism: The Development of Nineteenth-Century Balkan Literature" in eds. Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford, *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 72. Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 237.

Framing female characters in prescribed binaries significantly affects how they are treated by male characters, as Patricia Sawin describes.[174] "Good" women in classical epics (in particular) are often sexual objects for pleasure or reproducing, which is exploited during conflicts.[175] As Margaret Beissinger observes, rape was a form of warfare, and the "princess" figure was the hero's sexual "prize" for completing their quest.[176] However, when women used their sexuality for their own means, they were deemed subversive, 'dangerous sexual predators'.[177] Heroes often fear female sexuality, particularly its effect on bonds of male friendship, which has not really changed even in modern epics.[178] Helen Lovatt claims that epics functioned as a way of teaching masculinity, which had a clear, long-lasting impact on the representation of women.[179]

With limited roles, female characters are few and far between in epics. Large groups of women are invariably silent bystanders, such as the families of an army, as Helen Foley identifies.[180] Women who do have prominent, named, and identifiable roles typically have limited agency, as epics are largely narrated from a male perspective.[181] However, this is not universally the case: Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin point out that Helen of Troy in the *Iliad* is not a silent witness, although her voice is confined to

[174] Patricia E. Sawin, "Lönnrot's Brainchildren: The Representation of Women in Finland's "Kalevala"", p. 188.
[175] Although, as Helen Foley notes, not all women in classical epics are passive. Helen P. Foley, "Women in Ancient Epic" in ed. John Miles Foley, *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, p. 105.
[176] Margaret Beissinger, "Epic, Gender, and Nationalism", p. 78. Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin, "Gender and Homeric epic", p. 96.
[177] Helen P. Foley, "Women in Ancient Epic", p. 105
[178] *The Lord of the Rings* again offers a useful example: the spider, Shelob, represents the "monstrous" female, with her sting as an allegorical representation of dominant feminine sexuality, which she uses for evil purposes.
[179] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 14.
[180] Ibid, p. 27.
[181] Helen P. Foley, "Women in Ancient Epic", p. 110.

domestic or feminine pursuits of little narrative impact.[182] Greek and Roman epics tend to limit female agency and gaze to particular private or domestic circumstances; Helen Foley gives examples of dreams, laments, and watching from the castle walls.[183] With restricted physical, psychological, and metaphorical spaces, women can only partially participate in typical epic narratives. Women's roles can incorporate elements from other genre categories (typically romance, which Todd Decker observes) to provide "acceptable" spaces.[184] Women with power in epics normally possess heightened character or aesthetic traits, most notably high social class (for Helen Lovatt), great intelligence, beauty, and/or great wealth.[185] If women with agency go 'beyond the bound of acceptable femininity', they are framed as subversive and "Other".[186] Nevertheless, even "acceptable" roles for women contain double standards, as demonstrated by the roles of wife and mother. The act of women falling in love (which is deemed both inevitable and appropriate) shows an unacceptable prioritisation of the self over the community. Yet, marriage is a cornerstone of female characters in epics, often as an institution for exerting male control over females. Some more recent epics present marriage of equals (although the female does not necessarily assume a heroic position) to challenge the archetypal power dynamics of marriage.[187] Although no longer articulating the Greek use of marriage as a metaphor for 'functioning

[182] Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin, "Gender and Homeric epic", p. 96-97.
[183] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 27+205.
[184] This is best demonstrated by epics' tendency to "marry off" female characters who are dissatisfied with the traditionally female sphere. Todd Decker, ""We're the Real Countries": Songs as Private Musical Territories in the Epic Romances *Casablanca, Doctor Zhivago*, and *The English Patient*" in ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*, p. 502.
[185] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 97. Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 16.
[186] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 235.
[187] Melissa McCrory Hatcher deems Faramir's and Éowyn's marriage in *The Lord of the Rings* an example of this new approach. Melissa McCrory Hatcher, "Finding Woman's Role in *The Lord of the Rings*" *Mythlore*, vol. 25, no. 3/4 (2007), p. 52.

society', marriage between prominent characters remains commonplace in recent epics, demonstrating enduring patriarchal assumptions about female societal roles.[188]

Despite these restrictive archetypes and assumptions, some female characters have defied convention and entered the male sphere. In earlier epics, the "warrior woman" trope allowed female characters to actively contribute to the hero's quest: she participates in combat (often through cross-dressing) and often becomes an important ally (such as Brünhild from the *Nibelungenlied*).[189] However, the "warrior woman's" narrative ends in either her death or her retreat from the 'monstrosity of the armed female' into the feminine sphere.[190] More recently, the "warrior woman" trope has continued, but occasionally the female warrior triumphs, for example, Rey from the *Star Wars* sequel trilogy (2015-2019). Transgression into the masculine sphere aside from the "warrior woman", however, can signal the downfall of female characters, as they cannot sustain their existence in both feminine and masculine spheres and are subjected to "Othering".[191] Any movement outside of the feminine sphere encounters obstacles and is rarely sustained.

[188] Examples of post-Roman epics that "marry off" the female character(s) include: Brünhild from *The Nibelungenlied*, Arwen and Éowyn in *The Lord of the Rings*, and Hermione Granger and Ginny Weasley in the *Harry Potter* series. Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 185. Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin, "Gender and Homeric epic", p. 96.

[189] Helen P. Foley, "Women in Ancient Epic", p. 105+110-114. Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride, "Battling the Woman Warrior: Females and Combat in Tolkien and Lewis" *Mythlore*, vol. 25, no. 3/4 (2007), p. 35.

[190] Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman, "Introduction", p. 3.

[191] According to Stella M. Ray, Galadriel from *The Lord of the Rings* is Othered for being politically and magically powerful. Notably, male characters tend not to adopt traditionally "feminine" roles or practices (such as taking care of children) when female characters attempt to move out of their assigned sphere. Lilah Grace Canevaro, *Women of Substance in Homeric Epic*, p. 61-64. Stella M. Ray, *Constructions of Gender and Sexuality in J.R.R. Tolkien's* The Silmarillion *and* The Lord of the Rings, doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University-Commerce, 2010, p. 93.

In the last century or so, the possibility of female heroes has gradually increased, although they still rarely function as epic heroes. Leslie Goss Erickson even argues for a separate female hero's journey with different stages to the male counterpart.[192] Notably, the female hero seems to have adopted the "warrior woman's" typical ending, either dying (which Helen Lovatt deems the most typical narrative) or retreating to a non-heroic position after the quest, unable to sustain the heroic persona.[193] In some cases, the female hero must also assert their hero status by being "hyper-heroic" compared to their male counterparts, often by reviving the ancient hero's elite image.[194] The hero's journey of the "hyper-heroic" female hero tends to tilt the epic's fact-fiction tension towards the latter, suggesting that they are highly idealised fictional creations rather than "realistic", believable figures (as more recent male heroes have tended towards). Nevertheless, female heroes remain rare, and very few can reconcile their heroic status with aspects of femininity that they engage with. For example, female heroes are rarely wives or mothers. In that respect, female heroes challenge the assumption that women outside of the traditional feminine sphere are "evil", but the idea that women cannot exist simultaneously in both traditionally masculine and feminine spheres remains.

Scholarly interest in the representation of women in epic has largely developed with the rise of women's studies and associated fields of study. On the whole, however, this

[192] Leslie Goss Erickson, *The Search for Self*, p. 23.
[193] An example is the Black Widow's self-sacrifice in *Avengers: Endgame* (2019). Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride, "Battling the Woman Warrior". Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 302.
[194] An example of the "hyper-heroic" female is Rey from the *Star Wars* sequel trilogy (2015-2019), particularly in the last film (*The Rise of Skywalker*, 2019). To defeat Palpatine, Rey "summons" the power of all the Jedi that have come before her, which suggests that she alone cannot win. The effort nearly kills her; her survival relies upon Ben Solo's sacrifice. Furthermore, as Elisa Beshero-Bondar argues, this "hyper-heroic" quality of female heroes is often manifested as male-defined idealisation. For instance, female heroes rarely express their sexuality, reflecting the fear of female sexuality from earlier epics. Elisha-Beshero Bondar, *Women, Epic, and Transition in British Romanticism* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), p. 62.

literature has focused on the ancient epic, which has perpetuated the framing of women in epic in accordance with Greek and Roman perspectives. Greece and Rome continue to provide a reference point for both the hero and women in epics. Despite signs of change – Elisa Beshero-Bondar, for example, has recently published on women in British Romantic epic – more modern epics remain neglected and the masculine gendering of epic persists.[195] Although gender is not the central focus of this thesis, the representation of women nonetheless reflects the epic meta-category's inherent tension between adapting to the new and maintaining tradition. Thus, the gender politics within this project's case studies can enable insight into how music deals with this tension.

Having framed epic as a meta-category, considered its definitional issues, and outlined the central *dramatis personae*, we must now consider how epic interacts with time and space, both internally and within wider culture. These areas provide important theoretical grounding for epic as both noun and adjective, and significantly contribute to an initial understanding of how music can enter the discussion.

[195] Ibid.

Chapter Two: An Introduction to the Epic Meta-Category: Organisation, Aesthetics, and What Music Can Offer the Discussion

The ways in which epics unfold through narrative space – both individually and in broader socio-cultural narratives and processes – is a somewhat critically neglected aspect of the meta-category.[196] Epic's depiction of time and space provides particularly the adjective's theoretical foundation, identifying epic's abstract qualities rather than narrative-dependent components. This chapter also highlights critical narratives on the epic during the period covered by this thesis, and explains the purpose of each case study for exploring musical manifestations of the meta-category.

Epic and time

Epic's highly complex relationship with time encompasses much more than duration and temporal structure. The epic-time relationship is characterised by its varied approaches and dynamic relationship with epic's history, facilitating associated tropes or features through their multi-layered interaction. For instance, the normative long duration of an epic can legitimise idolisation of the hero, as their quest requires long-term perseverance and strength. However, although almost all critics recognise the significance of epic's relationships with time and history, very few texts are devoted to the subject. Those that do exist rely on specific examples or acknowledge that both time and epic are too complex to theorise convincingly. Even fewer texts recognise the

[196] Narrative space should be understood here as space that is 'characterized by or relating to story-telling', after Chris Baldick's definition of 'narrative' as an adjective. That space for the individual "work" is typically within the boundaries of the narration, whether that be in performance or consumption in another form; that space for broader social-cultural narratives is most often manifest in historiographical writing, such as composer biographies. Naturally, this understanding has flaws, but a full discussion of what constitutes narrative space (perhaps especially so in music with its highly complicated relationship with the work concept, as Lydia Goehr famously explores) is beyond the scope of this thesis. Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, third edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2460/view/10.1093/acref/9780199208272.001.0001/acref-9780199208272-e-760?rskey=BYnww5&result=1, accessed 14/01/2022.

importance of history as a separate but related component in the epic-time relationship. No model for the epic-time relationship has required a large critical following. For instance, the range of labels fashioned by Robert Auty, A.T. Hatto, and J.B. Hainsworth (including 'Epic Time', 'Deviant Time', and 'Open-ended Time') in an attempt to categorise various facets of the epic-time relationship are not widespread in scholarship.[197] Auty, Hatto, and Hainsworth are among the few that acknowledge that the epic-time relationship is inevitably bound up with the meta-category's historicity, which each epic "performance" contributes to.[198] The temporal unfolding of individual epics interacts with the performance's temporal context in what the authors call 'epic process'.[199] Over time, 'epic process' becomes 'unending adaptation and re-adaptation to changing social conditions and ethos', as interaction between individual works and the wider meta-category continually renegotiates epic's relationship with time.[200] However, Auty's, Hatto's, and Hainsworth's idea of a two-way 'epic process' oversimplifies the temporal connections between the individual epic and the meta-category, primarily as the individual epic is experienced by both the audience and the narrative subject(s).

Instead, I propose a variation on the idea of 'epic process' that acknowledges the epic's multi-layered interactions beyond the individual work and the temporal context of performances. These layers can be roughly categorised into two groups. Firstly, the "time as perception" group involves ways in which time is perceived, played out, and presented in individual works. This group includes the length of the "text", historical

[197] Robert Auty, A.T. Hatto, and J.B. Hainsworth, *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry: Volume 2 – Characteristics and Techniques*, p. 197.
[198] Ibid, p. 196.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid, p. 203.

setting, and temporal organisation (such as cyclical constructs). Secondly, the "time as cultural epistemology" group concerns how time actively shapes epic as a cultural institution. Perpetuating certain values, epic has become a historical burden and form of regulation for both the meta-category and culture more broadly (for example, suggesting that artworks of longer duration have higher cultural status). This group includes attributes like monumentalisation, epic's history/historiography (and self-awareness of it), and its relationship with timelessness. These two groups are neither mutually exclusive nor oppositional, but rather create a circular relationship. "Time as perception" features often justify arguments around epic's "time as cultural epistemology", and that same cultural epistemology regulates those perceptual features. These groups are complex, multi-layered constructs that vary considerably between epics in levels of self-awareness, how they are enacted or whether certain layers play out at all. Epic, time, and history have no normative relationship (especially when adding music to the equation), but the "perception" and "epistemology" headings provide an interpretive framework. Almost overly preoccupied with its own past, epic continually renegotiates both its place in and presentation of history.

Over time, epic "texts" and their historiographical positions have formed a dynamic relationship. Discourse on epic is connected to monumentalisation and idealisation of the past, especially canonical Greek and Roman texts. Briefly outlining how scholarship frames epic's history reveals a great deal about how epic has developed self-awareness of and reaction to its history. Early instances of the term "epic" were inconsistent in use and meaning, as the *OED* and other dictionaries can attest, so it is difficult to trace the extent to which conceptions of epic were historically determined

until the term began to acquire its initial standardised meaning.[201] Epic's initial definitions as a prestigious poetic form detailing heroic exploits started to appear in the 1500s in non-English languages, according to the *OED*.[202] The Greek root of "epic" (*epos*) provided only indications of the meta-category's texted nature and performative quality; associations between epic and heroes, quests, and other seemingly "normative" features were only first noted in English during the 1700s.[203] Reflecting the West's pedagogical emphasis on Classics (as it is now known), pre-twentieth century histories of epic focus almost exclusively on texts from Ancient Greece to the Early Modern period, and only a handful go as far as Milton. Although more recent histories of epic have considerably widened their subject matter and range, Greece and Rome remain central, often framing other eras in epic's history.[204] In some cases, like the "mock epic", epic eras or varieties are labelled according to their differences from Greek and Roman ideals, despite post-classical developments. The persistent centralisation of classical epics is influenced by the common scholarly narrative that the epic "died" (allegedly ceased production) following Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Only recently discredited, this "death" narrative has had countless repercussions for conceptions of epic, most significantly encouraging the belief that epics could not be created in the modern world. Claims of a second "death" at the end of the nineteenth century did not have the same widespread scholarly repercussions, but

[201] "epic, *n.* and *adj*." OED, Third Edition (March 2016). Walter W. Skeat, *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1993), p. 135. "epic (adj.)" Online Etymology Dictionary, available at http://www.etymonline.com/word/epic, accessed 13/10/2017.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] For an example of both of these trends, see: ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*.

nevertheless perpetuated the idea (shared by Hegel, according to Stephen Boos) that epics were unsuitable for modernity.[205]

The history of the epic illustrates a reciprocal relationship between historiography and reception. Critical focus on a limited historical repertoire (the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and *Paradise Lost*) has contributed to and perpetuated its monumentalisation. Histories of epic largely continue to frame the meta-category as an ancient, poetic form detailing heroic adventures, and view non-canonical epics (those that critics do not universally accept as epics) in relation to this assumed ideal. However, nationalist movements in the long nineteenth century also created and maintained a plethora of epic monuments. Texts written both long before (like *La Chanson de Roland*) or during the height of nationalism (like the *Kalevala*) actively contributed to nation-building and identity-forming processes. Monumentalising texts from "ancient" or "mythical" times does not necessarily idealise those periods, but reflects how the monumentalisation of epics was affected by broader socio-historical impulses.

Histories of filmic epics, the only other medium with a substantial body of historiographical literature, have a similar approach. The "golden age" of filmic epics, however, is naturally not ancient Greece or Rome, but the 1950s and 60s, an era saturated with films widely recognised in key histories as cinematic representatives of epic, a significant proportion of which were set in the classical and medieval eras.[206] While the epic filming style developed in the 1950s and 60s – technological innovations and Hollywood's post-Second World War prosperity enabled production

[205] Stephen Boos, *Hegelian Aesthetics: The Epic and the Modern Novel*, doctoral dissertation, University of York, 1988, p. 60.
[206] Examples include *Cleopatra* (1963), *Ben-Hur* (1959), and *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963). Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 192.

on a grander scale – the turn towards classical and medieval subject matter indicates the extent to which epic was associated with these eras. More recent critical interest in early twenty-first century filmic epics reflects the same pattern: discussion of films set in classical or medieval periods significantly outweigh those set in other historical (or fictional) periods.[207] The production and historiography of filmic epics replicates literary epic history's preoccupation with particular historical periods. Yet, despite this continuity, the histories of filmic and literary epics are still dealt with separately.

With the epic conscious of its self-made monuments and resulting historiography, there is, unsurprisingly, considerable scholarly interest in tracing epic production, particularly how creators have "triumphed" over excessively high expectations. For instance, Paul Cantor argues that Wordsworth's "failure" to write an epic in *The Prelude* is in part owing to the weight of historical expectation.[208] Other texts have assumed hybrid labels to avoid any negative repercussions if the work is not labelled epic by critics – this strategy applies both to contemporary works (such as "epic fantasy" or "fantasy epic" adopted by works including George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* series) and retrospectively (such as the inconsistent labelling of Arthurian tales as both "epic" and "legend"). These so-called "failures", "flawed masterpieces", and hybrid works have become the norm in the twentieth century.[209] In film, assessments of production of epics typically focus on technical aspects, like budget, or detail the

[207] While set in fictional spatio-temporalities, fantasy epics, such as *The Lord of the Rings*, tend to reflect "real" classical and medieval periods. In *LOTR*, Peter Jackson replicated Tolkien's use of medieval cultures to characterise Middle-earth's realms; Rohan, for instance, has Anglo-Saxon links. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine: Peter Jackson and the Making of Middle-earth* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2018), p. 248.

[208] Paul A. Cantor, "The Politics of Epic: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Romantic Redefinition of Heroism" *The Review of Politics*, vol. 69, no. 3 (2007), p. 377-378.

[209] Line Henriksen characterises approaches to the twentieth-century epic as either success or deliberate semi-failure that provide socio-political commentary on the epic category. Line Henriksen, *Ambition and Anxiety*, p. xiii.

struggle to get the film made, framing production as less of a temporally or historically determined process.

Epic's 'self-conscious invocation of epic genealogy' is also manifest in its "time as perception".[210] Historical setting choices betray continued associations between epic and the classical-medieval periods. Classical epics may appear to be in a "distant past" for readers today, but the narratives are not situated "in time" in the way that chronological specificity is a more recent concern. In contrast, later epics have a heightened sense of historicity that maintains epic's preoccupation with antiquity, which is important to the meta-category's "time as cultural epistemology". Relationships between "perception" and "cultural epistemology" have also affected how epics have shaped the histories and biographies of their creators. Epics are typically framed as their creators' greatest achievements: they take a long time to complete (typically multiple years) and/or bring the artist widespread prestige, often forming the artist's own "epic struggle". Producing an epic is the "pinnacle" of the artist's career, marks the best of their "mature" works, or is the great, unfinished work that might have been.[211] Histories of epics and epic creators tend to invoke the nineteenth-century artist-work-as-biography model to show that epics can make or break their creators as historical monuments themselves. Oral epic tropes also facilitate interactions between "cultural epistemology" and "perception", which both preceded and continued alongside written epics. Textual devices that aided memorisation for performing oral epics, like repetition, and narrative and linguistic formulae, have ingrained narrative, temporal, and thematic tropes as epic's historical

[210] Allison Lori Hersch, *Transgressive intent*, p. 10+21.
[211] For instance, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has earned her prestige above all her other projects, although, unusually for an epic, the series began her writing career. An example of an epic as the best of the "mature" works is Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

roots.[212] Artists use the collective cultural memory of these roots to legitimise their works as epics.

Length of "text" is perhaps epic's most frequently mentioned temporal aspect, an easily identifiable, non-media-specific surface feature. Noted even in relatively early criticism (such as John Clark's work in 1900), epics are some of the longest texts (and later films) in existence, which is assumed to equate to high quality, status, or cultural importance.[213] While the idea is now 'outdated' (according to Stuart Heritage), epics' historically long narratives reflect how the quest is more impressive if it takes both hero and audience a long time to see it through.[214] As theorised by Aristotle, length facilitates the epic's scale and scope in multiple dimensions (see below) and provides grandeur: an epic's narrative content alone could conceivably be labelled differently in many cases, but the narrative's length gives the content its extraordinary character and image as a significant artistic achievement.[215] Although work length in the last fifty years or so is typically decreasing (most notably in film, with Hollywood pacing ever accelerating, as Stuart Heritage observes), epics are still among the longest works produced or have developed alternative strategies for creating length, such as releasing one long story in a number of instalments (often a trilogy).[216] Epic length is

[212] For greater discussion around the tropes of oral epic, see: David C. Rubin, *Memory in oral traditions: the cognitive psychology of epic, ballads, and counting-out rhymes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 3-12.
[213] John Clark, *A history of epic poetry (post-Virgilian)* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1900), p. 11+30-31.
[214] Stuart Heritage, "A good time (not a long time): why Hollywood is trimming down its bloated film lengths" *The Guardian Film Blog*, published 09/11/2017, available at https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2017/nov/09/justice-league-hollywood-film-running-times, accessed 28/04/2020.
[215] Aristotle (trans. Anthony Kenny), *Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 48-49.
[216] The *Harry Potter* and *Game of Thrones* series are examples of this new trend (although neither are universally labelled as epics). The *OED* includes series in ones of its definitions of epic (noun): 'An event or series of events likened to those in an epic, esp. in being grand in scale or lengthy and arduous'. The *Encyclopedia of Epic Films* (Santas et. al.) claims that 3-4 hour filmic epics have been replaced by franchises. "epic, *n.* and *adj*." OED, Third Edition (March 2016). Constantine Santas, James M. Wilson,

adapting to accelerating modern-day cultural consumption, but the idea of a cultural product of grand proportions has stayed reasonably constant.

Time is also manifest in presentations of history within the epic narrative, either by being set in the "distant past" or providing 'epic distance', to use Mikhail Bakhtin's term.[217] "Epic distance" separates the audience from a past that is neither recent enough to be relatable, nor so distant that the narrative is wholly inconceivable, as Joanna Paul describes.[218] History in epic foregrounds tension between fact and fiction more than history in the "real world", challenging our preconceptions about events that have (allegedly) happened by using "pastness" to frame events that are otherwise unbelievable. However, not all texts utilise the "distant past", especially those from the postmodern era, which allows the audience 'to relate to the past in a familiar way' to collapse the divide between past and present.[219] More recent and even fictional pasts have emerged as alternatives to the "distant past", using a recognisable past to highlight the remarkable nature of the narrative events."Pastness" nevertheless remains crucial for monumentalisation, which relies on the fact that events have already happened. Markers of in-narrative history include location, customs, social structures, or clothing/architecture, but they must be identifiable and not wholly unfamiliar. These simultaneously realistic and extraordinary markers both foster and discourage belief in the events that take place. This use of history reflects epic's dual education and entertainment functions, regardless of whether the historical period depicted is "distant" or otherwise.

Maria Colavito, and Djoymi Baker, *The Encyclopedia of Epic Films*, p. 8. Stuart Heritage, "A good time (not a long time)".

[217] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination: four essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 13.

[218] Joanna Paul, *Film and Classical Epic Tradition*, p. 16.

[219] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination*, p. 14.

However, "epic distance" encourages the problematic assumption that epics perpetuate certain values, morals, or societal systems that are "anti-modern", telling the audience 'about the values of the culture at that moment in time'.[220] Classical and medieval era epics may include now-unsavoury or -antiquated cultural aspects (such as unacceptable tolerance of rape).[221] However, the modern landscape of socio-cultural values and norms is much cloudier than this characterisation suggests. Older values and practices often enable implicit or explicit exploration of contemporary themes. For instance, *Gladiator* (2000) explores political corruption, but carried out using methods from ancient civilisations, including rape, enslavement, and kidnapping. The framing of the film's events as a terrible injustice reflects modern veneration of the judicial system. Conversely, *Game of Thrones* normalises extreme bloody and sexual violence within a medieval setting. Often gratuitous, violence represents the most effective means of exerting power where modern methods, such as the judiciary and diplomacy, are absent. In an era of polemical, divisive politics, *Game of Thrones* shows a disturbing new trend of epics framing problematic ancient practices as acceptable again. Disjunction between ancient and modern values is particularly noticeable and complicated in epics written in the last few centuries with classical or medieval settings. Including these values or practices may be misguided attempts at "historical authenticity", but it also establishes "epic distance" without needing to rely on a recognisable geographical setting. Texts evoking aspects of "real" history inform or

[220] William K. Ferrell, *Literature and Film as Modern Mythology*, p. 6-7. Herbert Tucker, *Epic: Britain's Heroic Music 1790-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 43.

[221] Adeline Johns-Putra traces questioning of ancient heroes' 'pagan – and possibly barbaric – code of honour' as far back as the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, more recent epics are more explicit about their disapproval of certain values of practices. For instance, in *Gladiator* (2000), Maximus is given opportunities to brutally kill his opponents but refrains, which wins the respect of the Collosseum audience – his adherence to a relatively modern behavioural code is viewed in the filmic world as honourable, at odds with the Roman setting. Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 49.

influence audience views about past cultures and allegedly "universal" truths. Belief in epic's alleged truth content has led to differing understandings of how specifically the "distant past" can or should be temporally located within this fact-fiction tension. Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman argue that only ancient civilisations qualify; Joanna Paul suggests that distance is subjective and can simply mean beyond living memory.[222] "Epic distance" is arguably as historically and culturally contingent as other aspects of epic.

How epics are temporally organised is even less straightforward. Artists have employed cyclical, episodic, linear and non-linear structures to organise and reconcile epic impulses for temporal grandeur with articulating narrative time, but none of these can convincingly be described as normative: if anything, the meta-category is characterised by a lack of normative temporality.[223] Many epic quests follow causal sequences at least to some extent, even if not narrated linearly.[224] Perhaps the nearest to a normative means of temporal organisation is that epics typically present a long in-narrative time-span (reflecting the length of the quest), but not played out at a constant pace. Epic narratives typically balance the quest's length and specific, significant narrative moments.[225] In a sense, part of the quest or struggle is dealing with constant temporal flux, with periods requiring perseverance and also intense,

[222] Sara S. Poor and Jana K. Schulman, "Introduction", p. 1. Joanna Paul, *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition*, p. 13+16.
[223] For examples of different claims as to so-called "normative" temporal organisation of epics, see: Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, p. 81. Constantine Santas, James M. Wilson, Maria Colavito, and Djoymi Baker, *The Encyclopedia of Epic Films*, p. 14. Robert Auty, A.T. Hatto, and J.B. Hainsworth, *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry: Volume 2 – Characteristics and Techniques*, p. 215. Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 155.
[224] One example is *The Lord of the Rings*. The three instalments are divided into six "books" that sometimes linearly follow one another, but sometimes leap between two narratives threads. When this happens, the "book" returns to the point at which the previous "book" had started, covering what happened in each narrative thread during the same period without using flashbacks or other devices.
[225] For example, in retellings of the Hercules myth (particularly Disney's *Hercules* from 1997), most of the hero's childhood years are skirted over, typically focusing the narrative on the twelve deeds.

fast-moving experiential moments, which both demand certain responses from in-narrative characters and audiences alike. The hero's journey is perhaps the most common way of framing the balance between long-term and short-term, providing the hero's quest structural and narrative importance and the epic's primary temporal focus.[226] For example, the post-triumph portion of the narrative is often considerably shorter than the corresponding part of the hero's life. The hero's journey also maps onto other familiar (Western) temporal structures, such as the annual seasonal cycle, which frame the journey as non-linear and act as an imagery source for post-quest restoration and renewal. Temporal structures both organise and emphasise particular content, providing space, constraints, and different experiences for both characters and audiences. Temporal experiences of the epic are also arguably determined by narrative archetypes, whereby epics utilising these archetypes can be understood as part of "universal" plots. The "good versus evil" narrative is the most famous and most linear "universal" plot: every epic that invokes this narrative contributes to a sense of never-ending struggle, with individual works as episodes in a longer process of challenge, threat, and resistance.[227] Epic's temporal organisation thus exists on multiple levels.

Finally, owing to its use of allegedly "universal" themes or narratives, the connection between the epic and timelessness has a large critical history. The term "timeless" has three main definitions or uses. Particularly in musicology, "timeless" can refer to something not existing in time or seeming so. In vernacular language, "timeless" is

[226] Leslie Goss Erickson (following Carol Pearson) is one of many who view the hero's journey as cyclical. Leslie Goss Erickson, *The Search for Self*, p. 20.

[227] This is perhaps most explicit in epics that are part of series, franchises, or legendariums of fictional worlds (to borrow Tolkien's term), for example *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Star Wars* saga, and *Game of Thrones*.

often a marker of high quality and status. Most typically, "timeless" means not belonging to a recognised historical point or period, transcending historical contingency to be relevant for non-contemporaneous audiences, the most useful definition for this discussion.[228] Epic's alleged timelessness (lack of historical contingency) contributes to its monumentalisation by highlighting how so-called "universal" themes influence the meta-category's high cultural value. These "universal" themes are a 'broad[…] artistic and cultural phenomenon' understood as truths, narratives, and archetypes that have significance for all cultures and times, such as the good-versus-evil battle.[229] "Universal" themes have high cultural status precisely because they transcend cultural (or national, for Stephen Boos) and temporal boundaries, so epic's cultivation and elevation of them frames the meta-category as an important means for "universal" themes to maintain their cultural power.[230] Framing individual narratives within these "universal" themes demonstrates epic's foundation in high culture tropes. "Timeless" and "universal" do not mean the same thing, but are often used that way in discussions of epic's timelessness.

However, timelessness is far from universally accepted regarding epic temporality. Timelessness affects any sense of "epic distance" by suggesting that "pastness" is not a barrier between audience and narrative. Epic's emphasis on its "pastness" means that it present snapshots of particular times (whether the author's time or an imagined past) and quests' aims and methods are typically temporally contingent: while a

[228] The OED defines 'timeless' as 'existing or operating outside of or without reference to time […] not subject to or bound by the passing of time'. "timeless, *adj.*, *adv.*, and *n*." OED, last updated 01/03/2012, available at http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/202112?redirectedFrom=timeless#eid, accessed 19/05/2020.
[229] Pantelis Michelakis, "The Future of Epic in Cinema", p. 123. Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 145.
[230] Stephen Boos, *Hegelian Aesthetics: The Epic and the Modern Novel*, p. 18.

Middle Ages hero might fight dragons, a Romantic hero may complete a pilgrimage. Timelessness is also problematic when invoking ideas of destiny or fate, because the idea of a "right time" for an event negates timelessness's claim to universality. Leslie Goss Erickson also challenges epic's alleged universality by arguing that, regardless of content or historical setting, epics always provide audiences with insight into the time in which they were created.[231] Even a past setting or subject is mediated through the artist's socio-cultural circumstances, and epic's fact-fiction tension makes it ill-suited for claims of historical accuracy. Viewing epics as timeless thus relies on a set of misleading assumptions around the idea of universality.[232] Like other temporal aspects, the concept of timelessness does not apply to all epics, but its ideology pervades how we perceive epic's "cultural epistemology".

Clearly, time in epic is multi-layered, spanning, separating, and integrating the meta-category's "perception" and "cultural epistemology". The phrase "epic time" is typically chosen to describe these complex relationships, but it lacks significant definitional literature. One approach is to outline epic time's constituent parts. Auty, Hatto and Hainsworth, for example, distinguish between "Heroic Time" and "Mythic Time", without explaining how they combine to create "epic time".[233] This suggests that epic time is in fact an umbrella category containing and combining other temporal processes. However, this approach pays little heed to how time operates in epic's wider cultural history.

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[231] Leslie Goss Erickson, *The Search for Self*, p. 26.

[232] Epic has inherited the concept of timelessness partly from the Romantic philosophy that "high" literature is 'the vehicle of insight into a timeless realm of transcendental [or universal] values'. Since modernist and postmodernist reactions to Romanticism, however, the connections between epic, timelessness, and universality have (problematically) persisted. Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth*, p. xii.

[233] Robert Auty, A.T. Hatto, and J.B. Hainsworth, *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry: Volume 2 – Characteristics and Techniques*, p. 196-7.

Offering an alternative, Sarah Bryant-Bertail suggests that epic time critiques 'naturalized time [whereby…] the linear flow of the plot is interrupted', deliberately staging its historicity, and is thus anything but "timeless".[234] Although relying on theatrical apparatus, Bryant-Bertail's emphasis on the historical situation of epics is undervalued by most perspectives on epic time. Similarly, Bryant-Bertail highlights the spatial aspect of time:

> […] theatrical time is not just a series of connected units – minutes, hours, acts, and scenes – but the process by which temporal dimensions and rhythms are revealed through spatial images. The interweaving of the signifiers of space and time constitute the work's spatio-temporality.[235]

Spatiality does not rely solely on visual manifestation, which enables interaction with temporality regardless of the medium. Spatio-temporality is relevant in other genres or categories besides epic, so "epic" spatio-temporality should be understood as representation of time and space on an epic scale. Bryant-Bertail's choice of 'temporality' over 'time' here also usefully acknowledges that "epic time" fails to recognise epic's historical and spatial dimensions. "Epic temporality" is distinguished from other temporal categories by a heightened sense of historical longevity or importance. Because "epic temporality" has the benefit of suggesting multiple, simultaneous presentations of time, history, and space over the more singular "epic time", the former term will be used in this thesis. Nevertheless, epics do not have a normative approach for dealing with time, space, and history.

[234] Sarah Bryant-Bertail, *Space and time in epic theater: the Brechtian legacy* (Rochester: Camden House, 2000), p. 6-7+19.
[235] Ibid, p. 7.

Musical time, like epic temporality, undeniably differs from "everyday" temporal experience(s), but articulating why or how is difficult. Very little has been written about the connection between music and epic regarding time, or at least using that terminology. Allison Portnow suggests that musical time is 'the perceived time of the narrative that unfolds musically', problematically assuming the presence of narrative in all music.[236] Perhaps musical time is best understood more simply as referring to how musical events play out, without depending on narrative. Arguably, narrative and time are two sides of the same coin: time is the passing of the duration; narrative is the telling of that passing, so separating them may be neither easy nor useful.

This thesis borrows Benedict Taylor's conceptualisation of musical time framed within a broad model of objective time (repeatable) and subjective time (unique to the listener).[237] This conceptualisation allows correspondence with non-musical temporal models where subjective musical time is manipulated by non-musical forces.[238] Although clearly stating that there is no single approach to theorising musical time (and nor should one exist), Taylor's discussions of music and time in the Romantic era offer a starting point for the long twentieth century.[239]

Taylor makes three points around music and temporality that have particular relevance for this thesis. Firstly, music both constructs and reflects cultural meaning.[240] This circular argument mirrors the epic meta-category's numerous circular

[236] Allison Portnow, *Epic Time and Narrativity in Jean Sibelius's* Lemminkäinen Suite, Masters dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2007, p. 41.
[237] Benedict Taylor, *The Melody of Time: Music and Temporality in the Romantic Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 65.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid, p. 8.
[240] Ibid, p. 7.

justifications for its attributes (for instance, a long quest is epic, so epics are long quests). Across the arts, epic has actively contributed to collective cultural memory throughout its history. While not explicitly mentioning time, Taylor argues that senses of musical time are historically and culturally contingent. Besides practical elements (such as interpretations of tempo devices in performance), temporal markers may have various meanings in different periods of a work's reception history. As Taylor says, an understanding of musical time requires recognising points of reference and articulation with durational spans between, which relies upon a preconceived understanding of what can (or is likely to) articulate beginnings, endings, or structural highpoints.[241] Such preconceptions are invariably historically and culturally shaped for the individual listener. As Taylor states:

> Music mediates between our contradictory understandings of time and our temporal existence, both reflecting a particular historical understanding of what it is to exist in time, and reciprocally constructing our cultural understanding of this.[242]

Historical and cultural understandings of time are not necessarily alike. Listening to music both contributes to and is influenced by music's interaction with historically or culturally contingent temporal constructs.

Taylor notes the fluidity of musical time by borrowing from Jonathan Kramer: 'Music makes the past-present-future exist on a plane other than that of the earlier-simultaneous-later'.[243] Kramer argues that musical gestures allow time to function beyond merely mapping onto memory-perception-anticipation, a traditional, linear

[241] Ibid, 93.
[242] Ibid, 128.
[243] Jonathan Kramer, "Multiple and Non-Linear Time in Beethoven's Opus 135" in Benedict Taylor, *The Melody of Time*, p. 25.

configuration of musical time.[244] Taylor develops Kramer's model by problematising the past-present-future model and suggesting that Kramer's "gestural time" could be a spatial attribute (depth), as music implicates the past and future as intrinsic elements of the present.[245] Taylor argues that a sense of musical time is 'governed by the constant restitution of the past as the present is replaced by irreversible, cumulative movement towards an altered future', demonstrating that, despite being so imperceptible that it almost does not exist, the "present" sound of music is both altered by and continually alters past and future.[246] Because music embodies tensions between looking to the future and referencing the past, the past-present-future division of time should not be understood merely chronologically. The temporalisation of the listening experience, whereby the future is unpredictable but makes sense retrospectively, ensures that our understanding of music does not unfold with the sound as we hear it: the listener moves between past and present to understand what follows.[247] Taylor also posits the idea of music organising past/present/future time spatially into horizontal (forward momentum) and vertical (moments of stasis).[248] This spatial conceptualisation represents an alternative "plane" for time in music that allows temporality to have a dimension of depth. If past-present-future are organised horizontally and vertically, depth allows music to break out of that assumed linear model, like Kramer's 'gestural time'. A spatial understanding of time offers a 'depth of

[244] Jonathan Kramer, "Multiple and Non-Linear Time in Beethoven's Opus 135" *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1973), p. 134.
[245] Benedict Taylor, *The Melody of Time*, p. 100.
[246] Ibid, p. 58.
[247] This should not be taken in a strictly analytical fashion – understanding structure, tonal processes, etc. – but rather a continual but gradual accumulation of exposure to and absorption of diverse musics. Ibid, p. 30.
[248] Ibid, p. 43.

vision' that shows that music and time (both musical and "objective") interact through movement across multiple layers.[249]

Taylor also argues that music can organise and 'aestheticise the empty passing of time'.[250] While appearing in many forms (such as following a pre-existing temporal plot, including the hero's journey), the importance of music aestheticising time lies in its practice, rather than the chosen methodology.[251] Instead of passively organising, musical time actively contributes to a work's aesthetic, unlike other temporal categories. Following Paul Ricoeur, Taylor argues that 'the objective time of music really is a consequential part of its presentation and meaning […but] is not mediated through the intermediary of narrative technique', so musical time is not irreducible to narrated time.[252] Narrative and musical times interact, but the latter is not mediated by the former; musical time's aesthetic dimension separates it from how we perceive time more broadly.

Taylor's discussion of musical temporality acknowledges time's extraordinary complexities (musical or otherwise) and state of constant flux, continually renegotiated according to historical and cultural context, and the nature and aesthetic dimensions of experience. When "epic" is added to this discussion, defining musical time becomes even more complicated. For existing discussions of time and epic framing the latter as a narrative category or mode, "epic time" is a variation of narrative time, implicating certain temporal tropes (such as long duration and non-

[249] Ibid, p. 22+34
[250] Ibid, p. 91.
[251] Ibid, p. 40.
[252] Ibid, p. 107-109.

linear constructions).[253] When viewing epic as a meta-category, however, narrative time is a constituent part, rather than the whole. "Epic musical time" hence cannot simply be understood as musical time that evokes the temporal tropes of epic narrative, as concluded by Allison Portnow.[254] Rather, "epic musical time" suggests a musical temporality that both echoes the temporal tropes of texted epics and operates beyond the bounds of the "work" as a cultural product or monument (for example, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Wagner's *Ring* cycle reflect "epic musical time" by being musical monuments). This circularity has characterised the epic meta-category's critical history: works recognised as epics are monumentalised, which leads to the view that monumentalised works are epics, a circularity that also applies to the "epic" designation of other features, themes, or characteristics. For musical time, however, the circularity of monumentalisation complicates assigning the epic label. On the one hand, music can enter discussions of epic (and epic time) because they operate temporally as historical monuments. On the other, monumentalisation is not solely bestowed upon epics: musical works can be monuments, yet devoid of epic markers. Thus, defining "epic musical time" as the temporality of a monumental musical work is unhelpful and misleading.

Instead, I propose understanding "epic musical time" as the continual process of musical time renegotiating its function within the epic meta-category. Taylor notes

[253] Mikhail Bakhtin's highly influential writings on epic are a useful example, particularly when viewing epic time as reflecting the "pastness" of epic narrative. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination*.
[254] Portnow claims that "epic musical time" is produced when the epic narrative mode (epic topoi presented in an expansive and often non-linear temporality) combines with a sense of "real time" expanding. So, musical works in the epic mode are those 'whose musical time is greater than the time it takes to hear the piece'. Allison Portnow, *Epic Time and Narrativity in Jean Sibelius's* Lemminkäinen Suite, p. 1+39-47.

that music can create its own time while being *in* time, which also applies to epic.[255] Alongside epic temporality's own indeterminacy, music's transformative power make "epic musical time" impossible to singularly define. Instead, "epic musical time" relies on musical time interacting with other aspects of the epic, continually negotiating its role within the meta-category. This negotiation process takes place both within the work ("perception") and around the work's cultural status (its "cultural epistemology"), so "epic time" is not a singular or stable construct. This thesis should reveal how epic temporality is bound up in the workings of each epic's medium and how the meta-category as a whole operates, so epic temporality will differ for music and literature. Epic temporality is crucial in shaping other aspects of the meta-category, highlighting time and history as essential components within an epic or aspiring epic.

Scale and scope

Despite featuring in the vast majority of criticism on the meta-category and receiving increasing definitional emphasis, the importance of scale and scope to epic has not yet become the subject of a dedicated monograph.[256] Unlike aspects more dependent on narrative context (like the hero), scale and scope, as aesthetic traits, are the closest common factors across epics throughout history, although the boundaries of "epic" scale and scope are near-impossible to determine. Scale and scope manifest themselves beyond merely the length of the "text", often related to the time-epic

[255] Benedict Taylor, *The Melody of Time*, p. 64.
[256] As Stuart Heritage argues, there has been a long-standing assumption that the longer the film (or artwork), the more prestigious the artist and work. Epic's position in relation to this equation is based on similar assumptions that epic is among the most prestigious of all art. Stuart Heritage, "A good time (not a long time)".

relationship, and representing the substantial aesthetic and critical space that the meta-category operates within.

With similar associations, scale and scope are occasionally used interchangeably in the literature on epic, but their definitional differences are of great importance. Scale is 'the size or level of something, especially when this is large', while scope is 'the range of a subject', or the diversity of something.[257] Occasionally, scale and scope are conflated into 'dimension(s)', suggesting largeness in multiple parameters, which lacks indications of diversity, but can apply both inside and outside of the narrative.[258] Paul Merchant proposes 'epic proportions' as an alternative, which similarly emphasises largeness in multiple parameters, but again neglects diversity. Weight (Merchant), range, and comprehensiveness (Draper) have all been suggested as alternatives.[259]

Scale and scope can be manifest in epics in various ways, with Figure 3 listing the most common:

[257] Defining scope as purely related to a subject is misleading, especially as 'subject' is used in the definition to refer to a subject area or discourse, rather than a subjectivity. "scale" Cambridge Dictionary Online, available at https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/scale, accessed 01/03/2020. "scope" Cambridge Dictionary Online, available at https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/scope, accessed 01/03/2020.

[258] Examples of those who use 'dimension' include: Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 11. Marsha Bryant, "Epic Encounters: The Modernist Long Poem Goes to the Movies" *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 37, no. 4, Running History Backwards: Poetry – Contemporary to Modernist (2014), p. 70. Zsuzsa Domokos, "The Epic Dimension in Borodin's Prince Igor" *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, T. 33, Fasc. 1/4 (1991), pp. 131-149.

[259] Paul Merchant, *The Epic*, p. 4. R. P. Draper, "Introduction", p. 13.

Scale/scope	Manifestation	Characteristic(s)	Example
Scale	Length of the text	Longer than a pre-conceived notion of "average"	Tolstoy's *War and Peace*
Scale	Size/dimensions of the epic text's in-narrative setting	Large-scale, whether in area, height, depth, or other dimension	The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU)
Scale	Action sequences	Involving large in-narrative spaces, groups of characters, etc.	*Troy* (2004)
Scope	The in-narrative world	Diverse peoples, places, practices, cultures etc.	J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*
Scope	The post-publication range of influences that the text has had beyond the narrative	Influence on other texts/artists, importance in wider socio-cultural history, pedagogical influence, etc.	The *Kalevala*

Figure 3: The primary manifestations of scale and scope in epics.[260]

Scale and scope are present in numerous other ways beyond the surface-level features in Figure 3. Nonetheless, text length and in-narrative material remain the most widely recognised manifestation of scale and scope, significantly contributing to assessments of epic's cultural status and value, often presenting it (the meta-category or the individual work) as a monument.[261] An epic is of large scale and scope, so it must be of high cultural importance.

Compared to scale, scope is arguably overlooked as integral, but difficult to define for epic: the line between "normative" diversity and "epic" diversity is highly subjective at

[260] This table references various texts, including: Allison Lori Hersch, *Transgressive intent*. Ed. Andrew Elliott, *The Return of the Epic Film*. Ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*. Joanna Paul, *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition*. Paul Innes, *Epic*. Marsha Bryant, "Epic Encounters: The Modernist Long Poem Goes to the Movies", pp. 70-90.

[261] The term monument is complex and has received little academic discourse on the subject. Within musicology, the most notable work on monuments is Alexander Rehding's book *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), but Rehding is more focused on monumentality rather than the monument, a subtle but important difference. Since it is most prominent in the discussion of that case study, I have defined monument in Chapter 3 on Sibelius's *Kullervo* (see page 158).

best. Scale is comparatively easier to identify. Other categories or genres use large scale (for example, elegies are typically very long poems, and science-fiction can encompass large-scale settings), but scope's prominent associations with fantasy have discouraged discussions about its function within epic. Theories of fantasy deem scope essential for creating a fictional world, arguing that a world 'cannot be just a random jumble of made-up things if it is to be believable'.[262] Scope goes beyond the narrative's settings and socio-cultural landscapes, such as diverse characters and obstacles for the hero, so can be better understood as a means for epic's engagement with the extraordinary. Arguably, the epic meta-category is an embodiment of scope, given its historical diversity. Audiences may not truly comprehend the vastness of large-scale components of epic narratives without an illustration of that component's diversity. Epic arguably *needs* to be large in scope to accommodate its diverse materials.

Associations between large scale/scope and cultural value are frequently discussed in terms of grandeur.[263] The term "grandeur" evokes aesthetically manifest ideas of elevated status or nobility (for instance, a magnificent temple) or more broadly echoes epic's high cultural status (such as using a particular linguistic mode or being marketed as exceptional art). Scale and scope do not merely indicate size, but also magnificence. In film, grandeur refers more to perceptions of large-scale production: Santas gives the examples of a big budget, large cast, a "star" actor/actress, and extravagant sets/costumes/props.[264] Describing an epic as "grand" justifies its expense, time

[262] Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: a biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977), p. 191. Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory an d History of Subcreation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 22.
[263] W. Macneile Dixon describes the events and action within epics as always on a 'grand scale', for example. W. Macneile Dixon, "The Idea of Epic" in ed. R. P. Draper, *The Epic: Developments in Criticism*, p. 102.
[264] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 11+18+22.

commitment, or otherwise above-average production demands, for the resulting work is allegedly of high cultural value.

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, definitional literature on epic has increasingly emphasised scale and scope over other aspects. The definitional content of these terms remained relatively consistent, which has established a theoretical grounding for the widening definition of epic. Increasing discussion around scale and scope has coincided with the rise of scholarship on non-literary epics.[265] Not being media-specific, scale and scope lend themselves to visual depiction, and the rising popularity of visual media in twentieth century Western culture has encouraged criticism around scale and scope for those media. Similarly, the increasingly complex generic landscape in the arts has cultivated alternative strategies for categorising narrative types beyond content. The destabilisation of other epic features, notably the hero, has also contributed to greater emphasis on scale and scope and their consistency throughout epic's history. As Paul Innes suggests, scale and scope are 'element[s] of ancient and classical epic [that have…] become [epic's] most significant defining feature'.[266]

Scale and scope have perhaps most significantly gained critical attention for their role in spectacle, defined as 'an unusual or unexpected event or situation that attracts attention, interest, or disapproval [or…] a public event or show that is exciting to watch; an exciting appearance'.[267] This definition strongly highlights spectacle's visual

[265] See: Ibid, p. 10. Paul Innes, *Epic*, p. 2. Robert Burgoyne, "Introduction" in ed. Robert Burgoyne, *The Epic Film in World Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 3+9.
[266] Paul Innes, *Epic*, p. 2.
[267] "spectacle" Cambridge Dictionary Online, available at https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/spectacle, accessed 17/03/2020.

nature, although it can be depicted in non-visual media. Scholarly discussions of spectacle reflect this view, with significant engagement in film studies and opera studies (often linked to the sublime), including discourse on epics in those media.[268] Scale and scope both contribute to spectacle, but receive different emphasis depending on the event. While the spectacle of a circus performance appears in diverse acts, colours, and sounds, the spectacle of a battle is typically presented through large-scale opposing forces. Furthermore, scale and scope have the power to transform a small, isolated occurrence into spectacle, which is particularly important for epic.[269] As epic allegedly presents the most extraordinary events, spectacle is heightened further to meet these demands. The means of heightening varies considerably – using supernatural or fantastical elements, for instance – but ultimately aims to present a variety of spectacle that is identifiable as spectacle within an epic context. However, spectacle cannot be reduced to simply large scale and scope, as it is highly context- or narrative-dependent (much like the sublime) and typically centres on some action or activity. Scale and scope are qualities of that action that transform it into spectacle. The role of scale and scope in spectacle demonstrates how these elements are manifest locally and globally, for they rely on pre-conceived notions of "normal" scale and scope to be recognised as signifiers of spectacle.

[268] As examples of these discussions, see: Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 22. Stephen C. Meyer, *Epic Sound: Music in Post-War Hollywood Biblical Films*, p. 5+16. Sarah Bryant-Bertail, *Space and time in epic theater*, p. 19. Sarah Hibberd, "Cherubini and the Revolutionary Sublime" *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2012), p. 296.

[269] A useful example here might be a professional athlete. In their normal training environment, their sporting feats do not seem particular extraordinary; add a stadium, a crowd, and the reward of a medal, and physical endeavours take on a theatrical aspect found in spectacle. For a musical example, Ravel's *Bolero* begins with merely a few instruments and a simple melody-accompaniment texture. The music grows larger in scale (to include the entire orchestra and greater textural complexity), transforming a simple idea into a dazzling array of colours and timbres.

For this thesis, scale and scope will be considered together and separately. Like epic's relationship with time, the dual mechanics of scale and scope are integral to epic within the individual narrative, its "cultural epistemology", and their interactions. The case studies here will demonstrate key reasons for the increased critical emphasis on scale and scope, and an understanding of how this critical narrative has been adopted into epic's production and practices. Having received greater critical attention there, discourse on scale and scope in fantasy will be particularly valuable. Most importantly, this thesis aims to broaden the discourse on scale and scope beyond typical surface features. The fact that scale and scope are taken for granted makes them crucial for the epic meta-category. This thesis will confirm the significance of scale and scope within the epic meta-category before postmodernist recognition, while highlighting the inadequacy of pre-existing discourse.

Epic's commercialisation

Despite scholarly emphasis on its ancient roots, modern commercial impulses are increasingly significant for the production and reception of epics. The 'use of history as a vehicle of contemporary ideology' and accompanying heightened tension between past and present in modernist and postmodernist epics exploits epic's intricate relationship with history to produce commercialised products for the present.[270] More recent epics reflect commercial concerns both within their narratives and their manners of production, marketing, and consumption. So, the extent to which commercial concerns are integral to the epic meta-category merits closer attention. Central to all discourse on epic and the commercial world is conflict around whether

[270] Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 193.

the meta-category and commercialisation are linked by aesthetic or appropriation, when it does both.

Increasingly, the scholarly community is recognising that, during the last century, the epic changed how it operates in response to the commercial world.[271] Previously mentioned in generic sentences about epic's typically substantial financial rewards, there are several reasons for epic's commodification commanding greater attention.[272] Firstly, consumer culture has affected the production of cultural works in twentieth and twenty-first century Western society, particularly the need for a work to reap financial rewards. Moving away from Romanticism's "art for art's sake" ideology, the consumer has gained considerable power over the production of cultural material, and epic is no exception. Epic film's history demonstrates this clearly: the dominant critical narrative claims that the 1950s-60s "golden age" ended because epic films were no longer financially lucrative, with *Cleopatra* (1963) cited by Mark A. Graves and F. Bruce Engle among others as the "nail in the coffin".[273] Conversely, an epic's commercial success can affect its monumentalisation: the artistic and commercial values of epics are now seemingly intertwined. Perhaps the most intriguing reason for scholarly interest in epic's commercialisation is that the relationship is developing to become reciprocal. Not only does commercial success contribute to identifying epics, but

[271] Increasing scholarship on epic film and video games is largely responsible for this development. Examples of texts that discuss epic and commercialism include: Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*. Steve Neale and Sheldon Hall, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010). Eds. Harriet Margolis, Sean Cubitt, Barry King, Thierry Jutel, *Studying the event film:* The Lord of the Rings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

[272] Epic's commercialisation is now the subject of chapters, sub-headings, or paragraphs within larger volumes about epic, typically epic film. To my knowledge, there are no monographs devoted entirely to epic's commercial impulses. Instead, there are works that deal with how particular case studies deal with capitalist mechanics, for instance: Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise:* The Lord of the Rings *and Modern Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). Such texts are referenced here because they remain the most prolific sources on the subject, but naturally they reflect specific practices that may not be replicated elsewhere.

[273] Mark A. Graves and F. Bruce Engle, *Blockbusters: a reference guide to film genres*, p. 93.

commercially successful products are labelled as epics regardless of their content.[274] As Constantine Santas claims, the use of "epic" as a marketing tool is increasingly significant in the critical narrative of epic's diversification.[275]

Most literature on epic and commercialism focuses on the post-Second World War period, but their history is much longer. Although capitalist mechanics were less dominant, epics could demonstrate cultural and commercial value without relying on revenue statistics. Pedagogical settings provided indications of an epic's longevity and cultural or communal importance. Notably, epics' pedagogical characterisation as "universally" important contrasts with their elite "high art" status, part of a popular-elite tension that continues in epics today.[276] Even before twentieth-century consumer culture, epics lay in a space between popular and elite. Repeating pre-existing tropes also showed the continued influence of particular texts on contemporary cultural works. Commercial fiction has long existed, but reached new heights with Charles Dickens, although some circles deemed his serial publications vulgar and lacking in artistic integrity.[277] Nevertheless, these were among the early signs of connections

[274] For example, films as diverse as *The Goldfinch* (2019), *The Irishman* (2019), and *Black Panther* (2018) have all been described in terms of epic. Peter Bradshaw, "The Goldfinch review – Donna Tartt's art-theft epic has its wings clipped" *The Guardian*, published 26/09/2019, available at https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/sep/26/the-goldfinch-review, accessed 12/06/2020. Peter Bradshaw, "The Irishman review – Martin Scorsese's finest film for 30 years" *The Guardian*, published 13/10/2019, available at https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/oct/13/the-irishman-review-martin-scorseses-finest-film-for-30-years, accessed 12/06/2020. Steve Rose, "Black Panther: does the Marvel epic solve Hollywood's Africa problem?" *The Guardian*, published 03/02/2018, available at https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/feb/03/marvel-black-panther-chadwick-boseman-michael-b-jordan, accessed 12/06/2020.

[275] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 20-21.

[276] This seemingly paradoxical dual characterisation is crucial to how epic is understood. While inaccessible as "high art", epic is universally appealing because it uses popular elements from throughout literary history that are characterised by their accessibility to all. Despite being written in Greek and having a "high art" reputation, the *Iliad* is essentially a story about a hero. Epics can be viewed as popular elements framed within "high art" trappings.

[277] Jennifer Hayward claims that Dickens was responsible for starting the serial fiction genre, which provided much of his commercial success. Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming pleasures: active audiences and serial fictions from Dickens to soap opera* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), p. 3+6-7.

between cultural products (including epics), their perceived artistic value, and commercial culture mechanisms.

Film's development in conjunction with consumer culture has encouraged the over-simplified narrative that epic film is the primary source of epic's relationship with commercialism.[278] Instead, a more convincing argument is that cinema was part of early twentieth-century commercial acceleration. Having little pre-consumer culture history, cinema has developed as an artistic medium 'designed to maximize profits', as the arts increasingly need to be financially viable to survive.[279] Film is explicit about its consumer-driven practices, from its production dependent on studio investment (in mainstream Hollywood cinema), to its reliance on familiar tropes to avoid poor reception. Many vernacular and academic measures of popularity or commercial success have cinematic links, including box-office takings, "bestseller" lists, the "must-have" or "must-see". Similarly, the rise of film critics has encouraged a 'profit-driven approach' to a film's success through both generated revenue and critical reception.[280] Notably, however, some films (including epics) have achieved great financial success despite poor critical reception: a successful film does not require both.[281] Clearly, there is a significant divide between what audiences, critics, and creators consider to be epic

[278] "Film" or "cinema" here refers to what is conventionally understood to be mainstream Hollywood cinema. This category includes not just the major studios, but also some independent production companies and relevant infrastructure that conform to Hollywood practices and content tropes. New Line Cinema, who produced *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003), is a notable example. Steven Neale and Sheldon Hall, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters*, p. 5+243.
[279] Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, "film industry" in Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, *Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies*.
[280] The height of this critical reception, of course, is the annual Academy Awards.
[281] *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* (1999), the first prequel of the original *Star Wars* trilogy (1977-1983), offers an example. Highly anticipated before its release, the film was widely dismissed by critics and has even come to be loathed by the franchise's fans. Nevertheless, the film grossed at over $1bn worldwide. For box office statistics and professional and audience critiques, see: "Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace (1999)" IMDb, available at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120915/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0, accessed 09/06/2020.

and of high value. While creators often wish to capitalise on recent popularity, audiences may grow tired of the market's over-saturation with a particular genre type (an accusation levelled at the *Star Wars* franchise recently, as reported by Ben Child).[282] Similarly, epics are often tempered with studio-imposed allegedly "failsafe" devices in an attempt to avoid commercial and critical failure, with significant implications for ideas of artistic control and authority, but even this strategy can sometimes backfire.[283] Epic film has undeniably seen greater critical attention around its relationship with commercialism because epic film's commercial success implies higher cultural and popular value, which encourages further investment in future epics.

The epic-commercialism relationship still relies on the problematic assumption that commercial success equates to aesthetic value. Relying on financial statistics to judge popularity has numerous problems, including supporting (contentious) critical claims that epics have universal appeal. Underlying this argument is popular criticism's increasing reliance on commercial success to define epic.[284] There are numerous reasons why this view is problematic, but two are of particular importance here. Firstly, the judgement of an epic being "commercially successful" relies on arbitrary or

[282] Ben Child, "Bye bye box office: has Disney really given up on Star Wars movies?" *The Guardian*, published 05/02/2020, available at https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/feb/05/disney-star-wars-break-films-tv-spin-offs-the-mandalorian, accessed 09/06/2020.

[283] The character of Tauriel the Elf in the *Hobbit* trilogy (2012-2014) offers an example, added by the filmmakers and studios for seemingly two reasons: to add a female character (in a very male-heavy story) and act as a love interest for Kili the Dwarf, a transparent attempt to respond to contemporary political narratives around race and representation. Although issues of artistic control and authorship have been discussed in terms of adaptation, little has been written on the subject in relation to standard Hollywood processes and the studio system. An example of the former: James Russell, "Authorship, Commerce, and *Harry Potter*" in ed. Deborah Cartmell, *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), p. 392.

[284] This view is very rarely articulated explicitly, but is implicit in press practices. For example, box office revenue reports, articles about record-breaking works, and media focus on more openly commercially-driven mainstream cultural products over independent or "indie" creators.

even non-existent boundaries. One example is the media focus on films that surpass $1bn in the global box office, a previously exclusive group but now increasingly irrelevant thanks to inflation and the rise in films admitted. The figure $1bn is only significant for its extra degree of "largeness", rather than being inherently related to the product's perceived quality.[285] Secondly, measures of commercial success tend to prioritise the West: US box office figures are invariably reported before global ones, and individual statistics for non-Western countries or regions are rarely reported.[286] Having long cultivated its "elite" image, epic has appropriated commercial success as another marker of the meta-category (as Santas notes): commercially successful epics occupy a particularly "elite" position among all commercially successful works.[287] Many films (including those – such as *Zootopia* (2016) – that are not described as epics, as listed by Graeme Virtue) have surpassed the $1bn box office threshold (although some only through theatrical re-releases), so media emphasis has shifted towards how quickly films reach these landmark figures.[288] As measures of "commercial success" adapt, Santas notes that producing epics is becoming increasingly expensive owing to

[285] Illustrating this point, the bottom three films in Graeme Virtue's 2018 list of $1bn films are described in sarcastic and disparaging terms like 'inexplicably successful'. Notably, two of the top four films in the same list are described as epics. Graeme Virtue, "Movies that have grossed more than $1bn – ranked!" *The Guardian*, published 13/04/2018, available at https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/apr/13/movies-grossed-billion-dollars-ranked-blockbusters-dory-dark-knight-bond-potter-titanic, accessed 10/06/2020.

[286] For example, IMDb's (International Movie Datatbase) standard format for disclosing box office figures is to state the U.S. Opening Weekend figures, followed by the U.S. Gross, and then the Cumulative Worldwide Gross. The following provides an illustration of this: "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)" IMDb, available at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120737/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0, accessed 12/06/2020. Notably, for IMDb's top-rated film produced in Bollywood, *AnbeSivam* (2003), no box office figures are presented at all. "AnbeSivam (2003)" IMDb, available at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0367495/?pf_rd_m=A2FGELUUNOQJNL&pf_rd_p=690bec67-3bd7-45a1-9ab4-4f274a72e602&pf_rd_r=8Z3B7BTCBB9WQBE7QEFN&pf_rd_s=center-4&pf_rd_t=60601&pf_rd_i=india.top-rated-indian-movies&ref_=fea_india_ss_toprated_tt_1, accessed 12/06/2020.

[287] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 11.

[288] Graeme Virtue, "Movies that have grossed more than $1bn – ranked!".

their large scale and scope.[289] As Graves and Engle discuss, for media requiring prior investment (notably film and television), investors assume that epics demand significant resources to produce convincingly, and are thus a commercial risk.[290]

Nevertheless, there are aspects of the current epic-commercialism relationship that go beyond problematic measurements of commercial and artistic value. The developing commercial marketplace has cultivated commercial generic definitions that are often at odds with academic understandings and subject to consumer whims. Fantasy fiction offers a good example. A wealth of quickly published fantasy novels aimed to capitalise on Tolkien's success with *The Lord of the Rings*, which bookshops separated from "general fiction" so readers could more easily locate (and purchase) these new novels, as Brian Attebery and Douglas Anderson both observe.[291] Nowadays, Kristin Thompson notes that fantasy and science-fiction comprise a single section, as the latter has risen in popularity, and graphic novels have been separated owing to growing audiences.[292] To highlight new products in the increasingly crowded marketplace, epics are frequently marketed as "events", a form of pre-release monumentalisation with mixed results.[293] The "event" construct suggests that the epic is "guaranteed" to be

[289] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 22.
[290] Mark A. Graves and F. Bruce Engle, *Blockbusters: a reference guide to film genres*, p. 77.
[291] Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories*, p. 152. Kirsty Wark (presenter), "Omnibus: J.R.R. Tolkien: Master of Middle-Earth", first broadcast 22/12/2001, 6.45pm, BBC2, viewed 20/01/2019. Douglas A. Anderson, "The Mainstreaming of Fantasy and the Legacy of *The Lord of the Rings*" in eds. Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, *The Lord of the Rings 1954-2004: Scholarship in Honor of Richard E. Blackwelder* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), p. 308.
[292] Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories*, p. 32+152. Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*, p. 274.
[293] How this is achieved will be discussed later regarding *The Lord of the Rings*, an early franchise to employ such strategies. "Events" are not just the premise of films, however – the release of each *Harry Potter* novel was highly anticipated, with extensive media coverage, midnight openings, and a perceived "rush" to buy your copy before "spoilers" emerged. These *The New York Times* articles provide contrasting presentations of the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in 2007, one focusing on the statistics and financial figures, the other describing and historicising the exciting atmosphere. Mokoto Rich, "Long Lines and Wide Smiles Greet the Final Volume of 'Harry Potter'" *The New York Times,* published 21/07/2007, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/21/books/21pott.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgt

historically significant and high culture, relying on traditional high-low markers.[294] Epics are distinguished among popular culture by retaining their "high art" associations, but framed within commercial culture mechanics.[295]

The diverse arguments that link epic to commercial success reflect other critical claims around the meta-category. Most frequently cited is the idea that epics present 'a universal language of tropes and characters that sparks instant attention everywhere', as Chris Taylor puts it, including the ever-popular "good versus evil" battle or the "everyman" hero's triumph.[296] In this context, "universal" does not just refer to persisting themes/narratives throughout cultural history, but (to a greater extent) also those that have been consistently popular in commercialised culture (although the two categories overlap). Owing to this perceived "universality", epics are assumed to attract or interest multiple audience demographics.[297] Any unusual or unfamiliar

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ype=Article&region=Footer, accessed 10/06/2020. Mokoto Rich, "Record First-Day Sales for Last 'Harry Potter' Book" *The New York Times*, published 22/07/2007, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/22/books/22cnd-potter.html, accessed 10/06/2020. For more on the "event" idea, see: Mark A. Graves and F. Bruce Engle, *Blockbusters: a reference guide to film genres*, p. 77-78. Suzette Major, "Cultivating a classic: marketing strategies for the *Lord of the Rings* films" in eds. Harriet Margolis, Sean Cubitt, Barry King, and Thierry Jutel, *Studying the event film*, p. 49.

[294] As Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers argue, event films (and blockbusters) suffer from the assumption that they are mass entertainment requiring little intellectual engagement. Marketing the "event" thus presents it as simultaneously "elite" and accessible. Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, "Blockbusters and/as Events: Distributing and Launching *The Lord of the Rings*" in ed. Ernest Mathijs, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), p. 73-82.

[295] For an example of this kind of discourse related to the specific example of *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, see: Brian Sibley, "Foreword" in ed. Ernest Mathijs, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*, p. xvii. Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, "Blockbusters and/as Events: Distributing and Launching *The Lord of the Rings*" in ed. Ernest Mathijs, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*, p. 71. Erik Hedling, "Framing Tolkien: Trailers, High Concept and the Ring" in ed. Ernest Mathijs, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*, p. 231.

[296] Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 200-209. David Kerr (dir.), "Hollywood's Master of Myth: Joseph Campbell – the Force behind Star Wars", first broadcast 1999, BBC Four, viewed 05/11/2018. Chris Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2014), p. 489.

[297] This is a more recent development. In the film world, for example, studios and production companies can access more reception data than ever thanks to sources like social media. For example, dismantling of the assumption that certain genres (including epic) have male-dominated audiences has only recently begun. See: Barbara Klinger, "What Do Female Fans Want? Blockbusters, *The Return of the King*, and U.S. Audiences" in eds. Martin Baker and Ernest Mathijs, *Watching The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's*

elements that might scare off audiences are counterbalanced with the knowledge that epics consistently employ conventions 'that seem real enough'.[298] The continued recycling of conventions in commercially-driven epics perpetuates this reductive view, and has caused certain projects to be abandoned or delayed.[299] As Ian Nathan describes, Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* was famously rejected multiple times, as studio bosses expressed concerns about the length, adaptation process, and cost.[300] Epic's allegedly formulaic approach nevertheless can provide a financial security blanket with proven commercial success and cultural esteem.

The epic-commercialism relationship is neither the defining criterion of nor negligible to the meta-category. Although more explicit in this thesis's later or film-related works, the possibility of commercial impulses in the other case studies remains. No theorisations of the epic-commercialism relationship really exist, so each case study will be examined on its own terms, guided by two important ideas. Firstly, commercial interests and reception are *increasingly important* for the epic meta-category, but are not its sole concern. Secondly, commercial concerns have influenced epic conventions or formulae in the last century, which in turn has affected criticism. An explicit relationship with commercialism is a relatively new concern for epics and how we understand them. This thesis will offer a starting point for exploring how commercialism has gone from viewed as largely unconnected to epic to demanding

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World Audiences (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 69-70. Janet Wasko and Govind Shanadi, "More than Just Rings: Merchandise for Them All" in ed. Ernest Mathijs, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*, p. 23.

[298] Constantine Santas, *The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster*, p. 153.

[299] For instance, John Williams's nine scores for films in the *Star Wars* franchise all recycle material heard elsewhere, some times more literally than others. Roger Hickman, *Reel Music: Exploring 100 Years of Film Music (second edition)* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 2017), p. 488.

[300] Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 30-80.

scholarly attention. The case studies here will offer initial ideas about how music fits into that critical narrative.

Epic and the sublime

Given epic's propensity for grandeur and spectacle, the lack of scholarship on the meta-category's use of or interaction with the sublime aesthetic category is surprising.[301] Very few discussions of the sublime relate explicitly to epic, despite the insights it could offer for epics particularly from the nineteenth century onwards.[302]

The Greeks first theorised the sublime based on ideas of elevation and nobility (as Philip Shaw observes), but most current-day discussions of the sublime begin with Kant and Burke.[303] For Kant, according to Hannah Ginsborg, the sublime is an interaction between reason and the divine or nature, unmasking humanity's inadequacy; meanwhile, for Simon Court, Burke defines the sublime in terms of sensation and emotional experience prompted by magnitude.[304] Other theorists have dealt with the sublime (including Schopenhauer), but most of their arguments have Kantian or

[301] For an exploration of 'sublime's many meanings, the *OED* is very useful. The treatment of 'sublime' in this thesis relies significantly on the following *OED* definition of '(the) sublime': 'That quality in nature or art which inspires awe, reverence, or other high emotion; the great beauty of grandeur *of* an object, place, etc.' "sublime, *adj.* and *n.*" OED, Third Edition (June 2012, modified online December 2021), available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2446/view/Entry/192766?rskey=MnHLAR&result=1#eid, accessed 02/02/2022. "

[302] One of the few references to the sublime in an epic context is Helen Lovatt's description of the Trojan horse from the *Iliad* as 'an incarnation of the sublime epic moment, a work of craftsmanship which contains within it a war'. Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze: Vision, Gender,* p. 54.

[303] Philip Shaw, "Wordsworth and the sublime" The British Library, Discovering Literature: Romantics & Victorians, published 15/05/2014, available at https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/wordsworth-and-the-sublime, accessed 17/02/2020.

[304] Hannah Ginsborg, "Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology" Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, revised 13/02/2013, available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/, accessed 17/02/2020. Simon Court, "Edmund Burke and the Sublime", Dove Cottage & the Wordsworth Museum Blog, available at https://wordsworth.org.uk/blog/2015/03/02/edmund-burke-and-the-sublime/, accessed 17/02/2020.

Burkian roots.[305] Although the Kantian and Burkian types differ, their theories have several points of continuity. The sublime 'tests the boundaries between known and unknowable' by revealing something that exists beyond the subject's comprehension.[306] The sublime is not a 'tangible, empirical' object, but an experience.[307] Hereon in, any mention of the 'sublime "object"' refers to that which prompts or is the locus of attention during the sublime experience (for example, a dramatic storm or panoramic view). Anne Janowitz describes how the incomprehensibility of the sublime "object" (whether manifest in its uniformity, diversity, scale, or otherwise) renders the subject fearful because they feel comparatively insignificant or inadequate.[308] Always at a safe distance, Malcolm Andrews claims that the fearful subject has 'some reassurance' that the sublime "object" will not harm them, demonstrating the thin line between amazement and fear, and possibility of experiencing them simultaneously.[309] As Sarah Hibberd describes it, the sublime 'represents the empirical production of strong emotion that transcends its object sensually'.[310]

[305] See definitional material like: "Sublime (philosophy)" New World Encyclopedia, available at https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sublime_(philosophy), accessed 17/02/2020.
[306] Terry Kirk, "Monumental Monstrosity, Monstrous Monumentality" *Perspecta*, vol. 40, Monster (2008), p. 11.
[307] Iain Boyd Whyte, "The Sublime: An Introduction" in eds. Roald Hoffmann and Iain Boyd Whyte, *Beyond the Finite: The Sublime in Art and Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 5.
[308] Anne Janowitz "The Sublime" in ed. David Scott Kastan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) accessed online via Oxford Reference Library, available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:10012/view/10.1093/acref/9780195169218.001.0001/acref-9780195169218-e-0453?rskey=AZhRLr&result=1, access 22/08/2019. Sarah Hibberd, "Cherubini and the Revolutionary Sublime" *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2012), p. 312.
[309] Sarah Hibberd, "Cherubini and the Revolutionary Sublime", p. 300. "Sublime (philosophy)" New World Encyclopedia. Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 134.
[310] Sarah Hibberd, "Cherubini and the Revolutionary Sublime", p. 300.

As Kiene Wurth argues, twentieth and twenty-first century understandings of the sublime encompass a wider range of experiences.[311] As vernacular terms like "awesome" have become contemporary quasi-synonyms for sublime feelings, as noted by Anne Janowitz, the fear-amazement relationship is reconfiguring in favour of the latter.[312] But, the theoretical basis of the noun "sublime" is also changing. Postmodernism's interest in subjectivities reimagines the sublime experience as disrupting 'individual *and* collective identities'.[313] Steven Vine argues that a tension between self-assertion and self-loss characterises the postmodern sublime encounter, as the postmodern subject struggles to reconcile maintaining and justifying their subjectivity with the sublime's revelations of immensity and their own inadequacy.[314] As Lyotard argues, the sublime reveals the instability of the postmodern world and its communities.[315] On the one hand, the postmodern sublime continues questioning ideas around human agency.[316] On the other hand, the sublime encounter pre-postmodernism was focused on 'an affirmation and a reduction of' the individual; including the community in that encounter gives the sublime-subject relationship longer-lasting, wide-reaching consequences.[317] However, these recent critical developments are largely not contemporaneous with the case studies in this project. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the sublime encounter is neither singular nor static.

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[311] Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, *Musically sublime: indeterminacy, infinity, irresolvability* (Ashland: Fordham University Press, 2009), p. 6.
[312] Anne Janowitz "The Sublime" in ed. David Scott Kastan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*.
[313] Steven Vine, *Reinventing the Sublime: Post-Romantic Literature and Theory* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), p. 7. Matthew W. Binney, "Edmund Burke's Sublime Cosmopolitan Aesthetic" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 53, no. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (2013), p. 645.
[314] Steven Vine, *Reinventing the Sublime*, p. 10.
[315] "Sublime (philosophy)" New World Encyclopedia.
[316] Iain Boyd Whyte, "The Sublime: An Introduction", p. 3.
[317] Steven Vine, *Reinventing the Sublime*, p. 2.

Scholarship on the sublime across the arts disciplines is varied and reflects some of the persisting underlying assumptions.[318] Poetry is the main critical focus, with Kantian and Burkian models as the theoretical basis.[319] Musicology predominantly focuses on the sublime in opera, often linked with ideas of transcendence.[320] There is limited material on the sublime in film studies, which perhaps reflects difficulty in reconciling the sublime experience with the cinematic medium. Notably, criticism on the sublime seems reluctant to engage with post-Romantic materials, which means that film, being essentially a twentieth-century invention, is neglected. However, with increasing interest in the postmodern sublime, this scholarly trend may yet change.

How the sublime interacts with the epic (hereafter the "epic sublime") has three key components: an elite or elevated status or occasion; an extreme topographical feature; and heightened experiential intensity. While the latter two are present in non-epics, the former is particularly responsible for "epicising" sublime encounters based around their shared sense of grandeur and use of panorama and spectacle. Reflecting epic's prestige, any sublime encounters need to be an "ultimate" sublime, acknowledging the incomprehensibility of epic's dimensions within the narrative. An understanding of the sublime can also shed light on epic's historical development. The Kantian sublime's emphasis on the divine can enable the divine and mortals to interact in earlier epics. Encounters in later epics, however, invite interpretation in light of the sublime's combination of intense positive and negative emotions. Modernity's interest in the human psyche can frame the sublime encounter as confronting the self's temptations

[318] Key texts include: Eds. Roald Hoffmann and Iain Boyd Whyte, *Beyond the Finite: The Sublime in Art and Science*. Steven Vine, *Reinventing the Sublime*. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, *Musically sublime*. Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*. Sarah Hibberd, "Cherubini and the Revolutionary Sublime".
[319] For example: Philip Shaw, "Wordsworth and the sublime" The British Library.
[320] For example: Sarah Hibberd, "Cherubini and the Revolutionary Sublime".

or inner turmoil. Epic's immense historical changes do not reflect total abandonment of previous conceptions, but rather gradual modification in response to the current socio-cultural climate using inherently versatile features and devices like the sublime. The epic sublime, then, is a heightened version of the sublime encounter that is not historically contingent. To understand the particularities of the epic sublime, more detail is needed on its three key components.

"Elite status" is the most heightened aspect of epic sublime encounters. While found in the incomprehensibility during non-epic sublime experiences, "elite" in epic sublime also refers to the context in which the sublime operates. Epic's prestige means that a "normative" sublime experience will lack the grandeur, spectacle, or experiential proportions that epic demands.[321] For instance, the "elite status" of an epic sublime encounter would not just take place on any mountain, but the highest mountain, reached by a dangerous journey. However, "elite status" can also apply to epic narrative elements besides the subject and "object". For example, the epic hero is typically an elite figure, the sublime encounter often provides the subject with the means to complete their quest, or the encounter takes place somewhere close to the heavens. "Elite" designates a kind of "ultimate" version of the sublime, reflecting epic's association with prestigious art, and usually involving "elite" in-narrative elements.

An "extreme topographical feature" is more self-explanatory. The sublime experience typically takes place in extreme spatial and/or topographical circumstances – whether high, low, far from home, in extreme weather conditions, or other such situations –

[321] Fred Randel notes that panoramic spectacle is expected already by the sublime, but the epic sublime takes this to another level. Fred V. Randel, "The Mountaintops of English Romanticism" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 23, no. 3, An Issue Devoted to Romanticism and Criticism (1981), p. 298.

and in isolation, which encourages direct, intense interaction between subject and "object". Paul Fry claims that natural settings are necessary to contrast with the sublime's depiction or use of the uncanny, supernatural, or fantastical.[322] However, the "extreme topographical feature" does not have to be the sublime encounter's setting: the feature can trigger responses to the sublime or a focal point for the subject, for example. The topographical feature's 'immensity [… and] ability to express the infinite' reveals the unfamiliar or even dangerous environment bringing the subject in closer contact with the sublime "object", as well as the encounter's expansiveness, magnitude, or otherworldly quality.[323] This means that the sublime's subject does not need to be situated on or within the topographical feature for the experience to occur.[324]

The topographical features most typically associated with the sublime are mountains, which Fred Randel suggests are well-suited to staging sublime encounters because, as rhetorical topoi, they represent nature's supremacy and isolation.[325] Dedicating a space for the sublime experience is particularly interesting for epics, as it suggests that a certain physical environments can trigger or encourage sublime experiences.[326] Randel claims that mountains offer not just isolation, but a physical challenge to get there: sublime experiences are not everyday occurrences, so mountains provide proof

[322] Paul H. Fry, "The Possession of the Sublime" *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1987), p. 199.
[323] Elizabeth A. Kessler, "Pretty Sublime" in eds. Roald Hoffmann and Iain Boyd Whyte, *Beyond the Finite*, p. 68. Richard Devetak, "The Gothic Scene of International Relations: Ghosts, Monsters, Terror and the Sublime after September 11" *Review of International Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4 (2005), p. 627. Simon Court, "Edmund Burke and the Sublime", Dove Cottage & the Wordsworth Museum Blog.
[324] As Matthew Binney argues, the subject typically associates an object with the sublime experience in an attempt to judge how to react, but the object "itself" is not sublime. Matthew W. Binney, "Edmund Burke's Sublime Cosmopolitan Aesthetic", p. 644. Steven Vine, *Reinventing the Sublime*, p. 2. Elizabeth A. Kessler, "Pretty Sublime", p. 68.
[325] Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer about the Sea of Fog* (1817) is the poster-image for this association. Fred V. Randel, "The Mountaintops of English Romanticism", p. 294+296-7.
[326] Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, *Musically sublime*, p. 5.

that the subject reached their physical, emotional, and/or mental limits.[327] Also, mountains are spatially situated between the mortal and divine worlds, and their proximity encourages interaction between the two realms during sublime encounters.

"Heightened experiential intensity" is a more nuanced description of the subject's intense emotional, mental, physical, or psychological response to the sublime experience. Typically, these responses involve extremely intense, often conflicting emotions because sublime encounters take subjects to their limits, the subject's 'strongest passion'.[328] However, the 'debilitating effect' or "experiential" aspect of the intensity is not restricted to *emotional* responses; the subject may weep, scream, collapse, struggle, or hallucinate.[329] In epics, the subject's responses are more intense than for a non-epic sublime experience. When the hero is the sublime subject, the sublime encounter becomes part of the quest by dramatising human powerlessness, marking hero as heroic because they gain knowledge or power from the encounter, according to Malcolm Andrews.[330] Successful withstanding of the sublime encounter enables the hero to face further obstacles or enemies, even if just increasing self-belief.[331]

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[327] Fred V. Randel, "The Mountaintops of English Romanticism", p. 296-7+311.
[328] Simon Court, "Edmund Burke and the Sublime", Dove Cottage & the Wordsworth Museum Blog.
[329] Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, p. 147. Richard Devetak, "The Gothic Scene of International Relations", p. 628.
[330] Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, p. 135.
[331] An example is Aragorn's encounter with the Army of the Dead in *The Lord of the Rings (The Return of the King)*. Aragorn faces death if he does not win the Army's allegiance, but in doing so, he gains an "undefeatable" army. Enduring this encounter takes incredible strength, but Aragorn emerges embodying the epic hero role he was destined to have.
Matthew Binney claims that the sublime guides the subject through the experience, enabling recovery from the vastness or immensity. If we accept Binney's idea, the sublime experience then replicates ideas of fate or destiny: the sublime encounter is ultimate proof that a hero *is* a hero, because the sublime "itself" ensures that they survive. Matthew W. Binney, "Edmund Burke's Sublime Cosmopolitan Aesthetic", p. 649.

Based on this understanding, the sublime has great significance for the epic. On the surface, epics and the sublime show immense scale, and can share themes of spectacle and interactions with the divine. A sublime experience can function as one of the hero's "tests" on their journey. However, epic and the sublime are also linked by their "high art" or "elite" statuses and ideas of inaccessibility or incomprehensibility. The reception histories of epic and sublime have been guided by similar misleading assumptions, so understanding their interactions may shed new light on how they operate together and separately. Of particular interest for this thesis, epics from modernism onwards share the sublime's tendency to focus on the individual psyche, echoing the subject's isolation, mental struggle, and inability to understand the world. Moreover, the sublime can affect the modernist epic's de-emphasising of the hero. Although modernist epics used the sublime as 'a transformative […] moment that newly articulated the self as secular', sublime experiences can still reveal immensities with divine or otherworldly connections that put the subject's struggles into perspective.[332] In fact, the modernist epic's "unextraordinary" hero renders the sublime even more extraordinary owing to the greater distance between the hero and the sublime. Nevertheless, the sublime encounter is not strictly necessary, lacking the flexibility to be required in all epics, but enhancing a work's claim for the epic label. What the sublime arguably represents is an intense, temporary expression of the epic impulse or spirit: an attempt at presenting the expansive and a self-awareness of humanity's 'inability to estimate the magnitude of things'.[333] The three epic sublime elements (elite status, extreme topographical feature, and heightened experiential intensity) will be the most important model here, although it will not be used rigidly.

[332] Steven Vine, *Reinventing the Sublime*, p. 4-5.
[333] Iain Boyd Whyte, "The Sublime: An Introduction", p. 5.

Similarly, the term "sublime" will retain its academic meaning in this thesis; assessing the term's more colloquial meanings is a task for another project. While not a definitive marker of epic, the sublime has been undervalued as expressing epic's enormous dimensions, experiential intensity, and the extraordinary. Undoubtedly, the sublime is infinitely more complex than can be outlined here. This project is not meant to provide a new theorisation, but rather to draw out elements of the sublime that are most useful for epic, suggesting future critical paths to explore how the two categories interact.

The modernist and postmodernist epic

Since this thesis's case studies all come from the last 130 years, changes to epic in its modernist and postmodernist forms will be of considerable importance.[334] The modernist epic, according to Adeline Johns-Putra, is characterised primarily by anxiety

[334] Modernism and postmodernism are two terms that have complicated definitions and conceptions, so a comprehensive survey of that material is well beyond the boundaries of this thesis. While they both indicate temporal periods (the labelling of which varies greatly among the relevant literature), modernism and postmodernism also indicate ideologies or philosophies that are particularly characterised by the dominant schools of thought that have preceded them. The two terms are often linked in definitional literature, emphasisng their fluctuating historical boundaries and the problematic assumption that they are primarily aesthetic categories. As Erling E. Gulbrandsen and Julian Johnson argue, musical modernism can be understood as 'an attitude of musical practice […] that involves increased awareness of its own historical situation', rather than a 'stubborn insistence of modernism on the realm of the aesthetic'. Björn Heile challenges the idea that postmodernism provides 'an intellectual cover for anti-modernist sentiment' and claims that 'there is no simple historical continuity [linking…] modernism of the early twentieth century with the post-war avant-gardes [or…] the early twenty-first century'. Two further texts have been particularly helpful for shaping how the terms modernism and postmodernism are used in this thesis. Firstly, Leon Botstein's Grove article on "Modernism" offers a broad and balanced exploration of the term and its complexities, shaped by the central claim that '[m]odernity demanded the shattering of expectations, conventions, categories, boundaries and limits […] and the confident exploration of the new'. Meanwhile, Lawrence Kramer's notable volume *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* has been especially useful for conceiving of postmodernism: Kramer emphasises the importance of culturally constructed subjectivities, relativity of knowledge, human agency being related to socio-cultural and political positions, and reacting against modernism's nostalgia for unifying a fragmented world. Leon Botstein, "Modernism" *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3215/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040625?rskey=OsUZVq&result=1, accessed 03/02/2022. Erling E. Gulbrandsen and Julian Johnson, "Introduction", in eds. Erling E. Gulbrandsen and Julian Johnson, *Transformations of Musical Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 1-18. Björn Heile, *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 1-4. Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, p. 5-6.

about whether the epic was relevant for (or could exist in) a modern world.[335] The Romantic era initiated many developments, but the First World War and accompanying socio-political changes accelerated the modern West's rejection of past values and behaviours, as John Whittier-Ferguson discusses.[336] Views on heroism shifted as conflict became a source of disgust rather than pride, and the temporary relaxation of class boundaries encouraged the democratisation of the hero and quest. While still operating within "civilised" Western behavioural boundaries, the hero became increasingly complex, as Lilian Furst argues, with greater self-doubt, mental struggles, and complicated communal relationships.[337] Governed by a sense of self rather than community, Furst observes that the modernist hero's subjectivity or ego provides critique, deterrent, obstacle, and motivation.[338] Although increasingly highlighting the flawed or anti hero, modernist epics do not present the ancient heroic ideal and modernist hero as binary opposites. As Johns-Putra argues, epic norms responded to the decreasing influence of religion, increasing reliance on and belief in scientific objectivity (including psychology), and fluctuating class boundaries during wartime.[339] Writers of epic increasingly felt the weight of expectation around 'the most prestigious of literary genres […] the culmination of a poet's work, crowning his

[335] Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 155. Paul Innes, *Epic*, p. 24.
[336] John Whittier-Ferguson, "Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and the modern epic" in ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, p. 214+222. Paul A. Cantor, "The Politics of the Epic", p. 375-379+400.
[337] Lilian R. Furst, "The Romantic Hero, Or Is He An Anti-Hero?", p. 67. Joakim Tillman, "*Topoi* and Intertextuality: Narrative Function in Hans Zimmer's and Lisa Gerrard's Music to *Gladiator*" in ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*, p. 182.
[338] Lilian R. Furst, "The Romantic Hero, Or Is He An Anti-Hero?", p. 53-60. Melnic Vlad, "The Remediation of the Epic in Digital Games", p. 160.
[339] Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 155+191. Pantelis Michelakis, "The Future of Epic in Cinema", p. 123. Paul Innes, *Epic*, p. 147. Paul A. Cantor, "The Politics of the Epic", p. 400.

career', and, according to Line Henriksen, responded with either successful entry into that elite club, or deliberate semi-failure.[340]

However, Johns-Putra also argues that modernist epics were among the first to be determined by production rather than content.[341] As audiences have exerted greater influence over the production and content of epics, the novel and film, which Marshall McLuhan describes as 'the peak of the consumer-oriented society', have increased in popularity.[342] For example, poor box office takings for epic films discourage studios from investing in similar future projects. Shifts in consumer and producer views around generic categorisation (notably fantasy and science fiction) encouraged epic to return to its historical setting in ancient or medieval civilisations and accompanying "high art" associations.[343] Associations between epic and artistic superiority prompted increasing use of the adjective to suggest grandeur and scale. As Melnic Vlad argues, epics are no longer defined by textual or performative characteristics alone.[344]

As Allison Lori Hersch discusses, the postmodern epic expands on the modernism's nostalgic and re-imagined versions of the meta-category.[345] Hersch separates epics produced during the postmodern era into two categories. The popular, mass media

[340] Ironically, the continuing view of epic's prestige in the modernist era has neither translated to critical discussion nor canonisation of modernist epics. Christopher N. Phillips, *Epic in American culture: settlement to reconstruction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 4. Line Henriksen, *Ambition and Anxiety*, p. xiii-xviii.
[341] Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 155. Alexandra Wilson, "From Authenticity to Anachronism: Pre-Existing Music and "Epic Englishness" in *Elizabeth* and *Master and Commander*" in ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*, p. 300.
[342] Marshall McLuhan, "Myth and Mass Media" *Daedalus*, vol. 88, no. 2, Myth and Mythmaking (1959), p. 345.
[343] As Adeline Johns-Putra notes, however, socio-cultural change also encouraged nostalgic takes on epic. Following two World Wars and the fragmentary, incoherent art produced in response, both audiences and artists craved coherence and stability that could be provided by films set in the 'hermetically sealed' ancient or medieval periods. Adeline Johns-Putra, *The History of the Epic*, p. 191.
[344] Melnic Vlad, "The Remediation of the Epic in Digital Games", p. 154.
[345] Allison Lori Hersch, *Transgressive intent*, p. 6.

epic frames modernist nostalgia within the Western socio-cultural climate, although not necessarily fulfilling all postmodern ideals.[346] Certain aspects of past culture are actively revived, such as hero-worship directed towards film stars, which Marsha Bryant links to myth.[347] Hersch's second category is the postmodern epic, where collapsing "epic distance" between audience and narrative invites the former to identify with the latter's characters or ideas, actively avoiding nostalgia.[348] While emphasising postmodernism's plurality of experience, inviting audiences to identify with aspects of epics actively counters its "high culture" image, as Hersch argues.[349] Arguably, postmodernism has had a stronger influence on criticism of the epic than production, prompting broader definitions of epic and highlighting its adjectival use. For Hersch, the postmodern epic is highly self-aware of its own history, which validates using the adjectival version in critical contexts.[350] Postmodern epics are thus highly conscious of the divide between past and present incarnations of the meta-category, but they embrace that difference.[351]

This thesis focuses on case studies from the modernist and postmodernist eras for several reasons. Arguably, the long twentieth century is the most diverse period in epic's history for the term's usage and its critical complexity. A period with massive socio-cultural changes, increasing globalisation, and new art forms that invoke a meta-

[346] Ibid, p. 25. Joseph Farrell, "Walcott's *Omeros*: The Classical Epic in a Postmodern World" in eds. Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford, *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World*, p. 274.
[347] Marsha Bryant, "Epic Encounters: The Modernist Long Poem Goes to the Movies", p. 72.
[348] Allison Lori Hersch, *Transgressive intent*, p. 10+29.
[349] Ibid, p. 2-4+24-26. Marsha Bryant, "Epic Encounters: The Modernist Long Poem Goes to the Movies", p. 79-82.
[350] Allison Lori Hersch, *Transgressive intent*, p. 15-16+21.
[351] Kirsten Yri argues that *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005) embraces the past-present divide as an 'inverted epic[, which] invokes the classical conventions of the [epic] genre but employs these conventions to new ideological ends'. Kirsten Yri, "Inverting the Epic: The Music of Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven*" in ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*, p. 557. Hal G.P. Colebatch, *Return of the Heroes*, p. 9-12. Alexandra Wilson, "From Authenticity to Anachronism", p. 312.

category associated with a "deep" past warrants critical attention. This period saw music of highly ambitious scale, scope, and engagement with contemporaneous philosophy and socio-cultural debates. Modernist and postmodernist epics are typically framed within a misleading radical-nostalgic binary, so this thesis will begin to reconfigure this critical characterisation. Similarly, postmodernist theory has challenged the categorisation and labelling of concepts (including genre) that have great significance for scholarship on epic. Choosing the long twentieth century also responds to two key critical figures: Wagner and Brecht.

Any project dealing with grandeur, the sublime, mythology, nationalism, and the epic meta-category after the nineteenth century must engage with Wagner.[352] According to *Grove,* Wagner's theories on music, theatre, and art were highly influential in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Europe, drawing from his interest in Greek literature and culture.[353] Among Wagner's key concepts were the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the importance of literature for nationalism, and, in particular for Simon Williams, the romantic and epic heroic models.[354] Wagner's conception of the hero was assumed to present an ideal despite their dubious morality, as Williams notes.[355] However, conceptualisation of Wagner's heroes has been affected by the fascist movement's posthumous promotion of the composer's ideas and music. Film music discourse relies

[352] The literature on Wagner and his influence on the arts is vast. For example, see: Scott D. Paulin, "Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music" in eds. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn and David Neumeyer, *Music and Cinema* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), p. 59. Marc A. Winer, "Hollywood's German Fantasy: Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*" in eds. Jeongwon Joe and Sandler L. Gilman, *Wagner & Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 187. Irena Paulus, "Williams versus Wagner or an Attempt at Linking Musical Epics", p. 158. Simon Williams, *Wagner and the Romantic Hero*, p. 13.

[353] Barry Millington, John Deathridge, Carl Dahlhaus and Robert Bailey, "Wagner, (Wilhelm) Richard" *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press), http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2709/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-6002278269?rskey=NPT44p&result=2, accessed online 10th March 2018

[354] Simon Williams, *Wagner and the Romantic Hero*, p. 3.

[355] Ibid.

heavily on Wagner, often centring on his leitmotif technique, part of a broader "cinematic" aesthetic borrowing from nineteenth-century melodrama, as Jeongwon Joe notes.[356] Using cultural tropes to engage with ideas of emotion, memory, and narrative context, Irena Paulus claims that Wagner's leitmotif technique may be inconsistent and theoretically unclear, but nevertheless it retains a privileged status in film music and its academic discourse.[357] Self-consciously related to myth, Hollywood has essentialised Wagner's leitmotif theory as a marker of skill, cultural value, and means of regulation.[358] It would be too monumental a task to consider Wagner's full impact on the epic meta-category alongside other case studies, so Wagner's death acts as a starting point here. Wagner's greatest significance for this project, however, lies in the fact that his music and prose have relevance for the epic meta-category beyond music, from expanding scale and scope to providing new understandings of temporality. Epics in all media have had to confront Wagner's legacy in some way.

Active later than Wagner, Brecht is also crucial for the twentieth-century epic. His theory of epic theatre was characterised by a non-linear, episodic narrative that dismantles and deliberately exposes theatrical artificiality and illusion, employing techniques like montage to reference the Aristotelian idea of the epic not being 'tied

[356]Jeongwon Joe, "Introduction: Why Wagner and Cinema? Tolkien was wrong" in eds. Jeongwon Joe and Sandler L. Gilman, *Wagner & Cinema*, p. 2-3. Marc A. Winer, "Hollywood's German Fantasy: Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*" in eds. Jeongwon Joe and Sandler L. Gilman, *Wagner & Cinema*, p. 197.
[357] Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 4 and 8. Irena Paulus, "Williams versus Wagner or an Attempt at Linking Musical Epics", p. 172.
[358] The plethora of literature on the leitmotif in film is testament to how widespread the technique is in film music and as an interpretive device for film music scholarship. See: Scott D. Paulin, "Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music" in eds. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn and David Neumeyer, *Music and Cinema*, p. 58. Jeongwon Joe, "Introduction: Why Wagner and Cinema? Tolkien was wrong" in eds. Jeongwon Joe and Sandler L. Gilman, *Wagner & Cinema*, p. 8. Emilio Audissino, *John Williams's Film Music: Jaws, Star Wars, Raiders of the Lost Ark, and the Return of the Classical Hollywood Music Style* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), p. 26. Frank Lehman, "Manufacturing the Epic Score: Hans Zimmer and the Sounds of Significance" in ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle*, p. 128.

to time', as John Willett describes.[359] The aim, according to Willett, is to break down the assumption that theatre presents illusion by encouraging audience involvement.[360] Audience-actor collaboration (such as breaking the fourth wall, as Fiona Macintosh observes) makes epic theatre conscious of its theatricality, and ensures that a work's epic status is determined by its audience.[361] As music contributes to these aims, epic theatre provides a possible model for the music-epic relationship. By adopting literary epic tropes including episodic narrative, epic theatre demonstrated how music, text, and theatre could combine to replicate aspects of epic literature and its formal conventions, as Joy Calico claims.[362] Some of Brecht's ideas developed Wagnerian theory – particularly around mythology and flawed heroic personas – but he rejected other aspects, including the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, as Stephen Hinton claims.[363] Brechtian "epicness", as Hinton argues, really can only be manifest in performance, displaying innovation that no longer has the power to rejuvenate.[364] Brecht, however, explicitly labels his theories as "epic", thus presenting an influential example of how epic can translate into non-poetic media, emphasising purpose over content.[365] Brecht's theories provide an approach to epic norms that relies remarkably little on past understandings and methods.

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[359] Joy H. Calico, "Epic Gesamtkunstwerk" in ed. David Michael Imhoof, Margaret Eleanor Menninger, Anthony J. Steinhoff, *The total work of art: foundations, articulations, inspirations* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), p. 264. Kim H. Kowalke, "Brecht and music: theory and practice" in eds. Peter Thomson, Glendyr Sacks, *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht, 2nd edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 249.John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (London: Methuen & Co., 1959), p. 170+179.
[360] John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, p. 179. Joy H. Calico, "Epic Gesamtkunstwerk", p. 296.
[361] Stephen Hinton, "The Concept of Epic Opera: Theoretical Anomalies in the Brecht-Weill Partnership" in ed. Margaret Notley, *Opera after 1900* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 190. Fiona Macintosh, "'Epic' Performances" in eds. Fiona Macintosh, Justine McConnell, Stephen Harrison, and Claire Kenward, *Epic Performances from the Middle Ages into the Twenty-first Century*, p. 4.
[362] Stephen Hinton, "The Concept of Epic Opera", p. 187. Joy H. Calico, "Epic Gesamtkunstwerk", p. 262-264. John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, p. 126.
[363] John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, p. 71. Joy H. Calico, "Epic Gesamtkunstwerk", p. 266. Stephen Hinton, "The Concept of Epic Opera", p. 187.
[364] Ibid, p. 191.
[365] Stephen Hinton uses the example of leitmotif as fulfilling an "epic" purpose. Ibid, p. 189.

Come the twenty-first century, understandings of "epic" have changed again. The adjective has exploded in vernacular language and appears more regularly in academic discourse, extending far beyond the arts owing to the term's assumed meaning as synonymous to "amazing" or "enormous". Arguably, the noun has seen the greatest definitional changes, responding to postmodern developments, changing understandings of heroism, and inter-genre borrowing.[366] Epic's relationships with related genres are increasingly complicated, largely owing to criticism of genre and the bewildering array of labels. However, descriptions of science-fiction or fantasy works as "(an) epic" demonstrate that labels are now assigned based on production and/or reception, rather than content. The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) offers a prolific example that rarely reflects academic understandings of epic, while frequently labelled so in the media. The MCU's epic reception markers (revenue, popularity, critical acclaim, and continued popularity in spite of – or because of – the steady output for over a decade) demonstrate how "epic" increasingly describes reception rather than product.[367]

In this thesis, the twentieth- and twenty-first century epic and its criticism will be understood as highly diverse in medium, content, ideology, and sources of inspiration, moving away from mythology to reflect the increasing influence of science and realism. Despite not requiring the "distant past", the long twentieth century epic has arguably never been more self-aware of its history and historicity, manifest in a

[366] Allison Lori Hersch gives a brief outline of how epic has changed in the postmodern era, but little is made of the increasing divergence between noun and adjective. Allison Lori Hersch, *Transgressive intent*, p. 29-32.

[367] In one sense, however, this is a point of continuity, since epics have constantly had to reaffirm their epic status in "cultural epistemology" terms. In the twenty-first century, however, reception and reception history have overtaken content as the dominant conceptualising factor of epics, both contemporary and pre-twentieth-century.

heightened past-present tension. Finally, epic's adoption and adaptation by non-literary media has encouraged both vernacular and academic critics to increasingly define and identify epics based on production and reception rather than content.

Case studies

To explore the issues discussed above, I will examine four case studies from the late nineteenth century through to the early twenty-first century, all of which are orchestral works.[368] At some point, the academy has labelled these case studies or their associated paratexts as "(an) epic". "Orchestral work" is understood here as a work that is scored primarily for and highlights the orchestra. Voices may be used, but they are treated as another timbre, rather than being accompanied by the orchestra – the work's form, structure, or function is not determined by the vocal parts. The term "epic" is still reasonably rare in musicology, so focusing on orchestral music warrants explanation.

Musicologists have tended to use "epic" in specific circumstances. A search of RILM abstracts of musical literature provides 1196 results for the single word 'epic'.[369] Figure

[368] The late nineteenth century is used here instead of "late Romantic" because the case studies were (in part) chosen for their historical or chronological positions rather than their stylistic attributes. However, the term "Romantic" will be used later in this thesis to denote the philosophical and stylistic movement, with the acknowledgement that, as Jim Samson argues, the terms "Romantic" and "Romanticism" evade fixed definition. The nearest thing to common ground that Samson suggests that all Romantics had was a 'lofty idealism' and aspiration to 'elevate art to a powerful metaphysical status', whether that be through a sublime, nationalistic, nostalgic, or fantastical aesthetic, seeking an 'alternative reality'. Like modernism and postmodernism, Romanticism often seems to suffer from essentialisation when artists consciously use it as an aesthetic rather than a philosophical movement. For instance, the language of Hollywood film music is often deemed indebted to "late Romanticism", conveniently ignoring the fact that late-Romanticism was not a singular, homogenous aesthetic. Jim Samson, "Romanticism" *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3215/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023751?rskey=qFlubU&result=1, accessed 03/02/2022. Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, p. 78-79.

[369] Search conducted on 8th January 2018, narrowed to results in English and non audio-visual content.

4 shows the generic spread of the first 700 results when sorted into very rudimentary categories:[370]

Genre category	No. of results	% of total results (rounded to 1 decimal place)
Opera/theatre	69	9.9
Film music	22	3.1
Popular music*	64	9.1
Folk/oral traditions	472	67.4
Classical music**	48	7.0
Early music***	24	3.4
Musicology/theory	1	0.1
	700	**100**

Figure 4: Genre distribution of RILM search 'epic', first 700 results[371]

Texts on folk or oral epics dominate the literature, demonstrating the primarily ethnomusicological engagement with "epic". When "epic" *is* used in musicology, it is typically framed by scare quotes to indicate irony or dissatisfaction with its assumed vernacular meaning. In film music and opera literature, as well as the occasional description of a historiographical trend, the scare quotes are abandoned.[372] An exception to this rule is Stephen Meyer, who uses the term non-ironically in his volumes on music in epic film.[373]

Based on these results, opera is arguably the most obvious choice for discussing epic music. However, since it is always texted, opera is limited in what it can reveal about music as non-texted epic. Orchestral music, meanwhile, has varying dependency on

[370] Category choice made based on each entry's keywords and title.
[371] Search results as of January 2018
*Popular music includes jazz, hip-hop, easy listening etc.
**Classical music includes all art music from the Baroque era to the present day,except opera/theatre music and early music.
***Early music includes all music genres from the earliest civilisations until the Baroque era.
[372] See: Charles Edward McGuire, *Elgar's Oratorios: The creation of an epic narrative* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002).
[373] Ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle.*

text (whether a written programme, lyrics, or material that the music accompanies, such as a film), so offers greater opportunities to explore epic's reliance on text. Similarly, orchestral music enables comparison of art and film musics on similar terms, which is highly significant because of film's increasingly important relationship with epic.

Part of the reason that musicology has neglected the epic meta-category as an interpretive tool lies in the fact that it is very difficult to identify a paradigmatic example, as the meta-category evades such clarity of articulation. One possible model for musicological discussions around epic could be Beethoven's *Eroica*: it is undeniably a monument, details the exploits of a hero or heroic figure, and structurally has echoes of the quest narrative.[374] However, the idea of the meta-category evades a fixed image of the "ideal" epic, which applies to music and musicology as much as it does to other media. Even the allegedly paradigmatic examples of epics in literature and film have anomalous or subversive elements. Although the *Eroica* has a strong claim for being a paradigmatic representation of music's engagement with the epic meta-category, the construct of the quintessential example is perhaps avoided where possible in order to assess the value of the meta-category idea.

Case studies were chosen from the long twentieth-century for several reasons. The recent introduction of music into discourse on visual media epics demonstrates how views of music's ability to influence, heighten, or detract from texted epics are changing. Focusing on the era where music's accompanimental uses (for film, video games, and so on) multiplied allows greater investigation in this area. The chosen case

[374] Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, p. 24.

studies also reflect the increasing belief that non-literary media are a legitimate means to produce epics during this period and acknowledging commercial influences on the meta-category. Ultimately, each case study offers an insight into one of the many significant changes to epic in the last 150 years or so, focusing on providing initial answers for the following three research questions:

- How, and in what ways, has the definition of "epic" changed over time and according to different usage?
- How can musicological study and methodologies inform our understanding of "epic"?
- And, how can our understanding of "epic" inform musicology and interpretation of music?

By and large, I am using a hermeneutical approach for this thesis, with a brief foray into topic theory as that has particular relevance for the chapter on Mahler. There are many possible methodologies that could be employed when exploring how the epic meta-category interacts with music: I am not claiming that my approach is the best strategy, but rather that hermeneutics can offer a useful starting point for answering research questions that have very little previous engagement in musicology. This is not the place for a detailed critique of the hermeneutical approach, but suffice it to say that no methodological choice is without its problems. One notable strength of a hermeneutical strategy here, however, is the relative flexibility that it can offer a project that discusses such diverse case studies.

Sibelius's *Kullervo Symphony* (1892) offers one version of epic from the end of the nineteenth century. Based on the tale of Kullervo from the *Kalevala*, *Kullervo* was produced in a period of heightened nationalism, but subverts many tropes found in epics on nationalist subjects and has a lot in common with tragedy.[375] Thus, examining Sibelius's *Kullervo* enables discussions around epic and its related genres, the possibility of an anti-epic, and epic's importance in nationalist ideology. *Kullervo*'s complicated reception history also allows a reappraisal of how epics are perceived in the short- and long-term. Engaging with prominent aspects of nineteenth century epic (nationalism, interest in mythology, and so on), *Kullervo* is perhaps the case study that best illustrates epic's long history of subverting its assumed norms. *Kullervo* challenges pre-conceived notions of epic and proves that generalisations about epic in any era can never be wholly satisfactory.

Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* (1895) offers a contrasting perspective on early modernist epics. Of "epic" scale and scope on the surface, the symphony's complicated relationship with text shows epic's early signs of moving away from being solely texted. Mahler's programme framed the work as a continuation of the First Symphony, evoking ideas of transcendence, the sublime and the divine, and dealing with a post-triumph time and space usually neglected by epics. However, Mahler's rapid withdrawal of the programme questions the extent to which the programme dictates interpretations of the music, or whether thematic ideas reside primarily in the music. *Symphony No. 2* offers a useful counterpart to *Kullervo* as to how late-nineteenth-century composers interacted with the epic's critical environment.

[375] For a useful discussion on *Kullervo* and its links to the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala,* see: Tomi Mäkelä, *Jean Sibelius* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 179-185.

Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica* (1953) presents the opportunity to examine two key debates about twentieth-century epics. Firstly, based on the score for *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948), the symphony provides insight into the relationships between epic, film, and music, thus connected with three "texts": the original narrative (Scott's diaries), the film, and the symphony's programme. The score has received greater attention than the symphony within film music and symphonic discourses respectively, which affects music's potential claim as an independent epic. Secondly, *Sinfonia Antartica*'s depiction of Robert Falcon Scott's 1912 quest to reach the South Pole contributes to debates about whether "real-life" events can be epics or whether they depend on artistic representation or narrativisation to merit the label. Elements of Scott's quest subvert epic norms, but the story also engages with (or occasionally foreshadows) newer understandings of epic, notably the quest seeking personal/national achievement. *Sinfonia Antartica* thus offers a stepping stone between early modernist and postmodernist epic.

The final case study is Howard Shore's score for Peter Jackson's cinematic adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*). Like *Sinfonia Antartica*, Shore's score relates to multiple "texts": the novel, the films, reception (scholarly and vernacular), and, as Ian Nathan argues, pre-existing fan imagination.[376] Nevertheless, *LOTR* has taken on a life outside of its filmic role, achieving considerable commercial success and prompting scholarly and vernacular criticism. Accompanying a highly successful film franchise, *LOTR* provides an insight into the epic's relationship with commercialism,

[376] Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 278+297. Jennifer Nelson, *Classic FM Saturday Night at the Movies: The extraordinary partnerships behind cinema's greatest scores* (London: Elliott and Thompson Limited, 2018), p. 159.

which encourages close analysis of the idea of "universal" themes and reliance on problematic real-world tropes (like exoticism). Based on probably *the* archetypal fantasy text, *LOTR* also invites discussion of the twenty-first century evolution of epic's chameleonic and hybrid tendencies, including the multi-threaded narrative's reimagining of the hero concept and simultaneous use of different heroic archetypes. *LOTR* thus provides an example of how twentieth-century views of epic are reconfigured in a postmodern environment.

Chapter Three: Sibelius's *Kullervo Symphony*: A Case for the Anti-Epic

Introduction

Based on Finland's national mythology, the *Kalevala*, Sibelius's *Kullervo Symphony* engages with the epic meta-category on multiple levels. Associated with the *Kalevala*'s history and reception as an epic (being the primary source of Finland's imagined mythical past), scholarship on Sibelius typically frames *Kullervo* as Sibelius's 'creative breakthrough' (as Glenda Dawn Goss describes it), establishing his musical and Finnish nationalist reputation, yet scholarship on the symphony only uses "epic" to describe the *Kalevala*.[377] By understanding *Kullervo* as a commentary on the *Kalevala*'s reception, however, Sibelius poses two questions: how to negotiate the ancient epic ideal in a modern context, and whether there is such a thing as an anti-epic.

First performed in 1892, *Kullervo* is disadvantaged as an early work in claiming epic status. Conventional musicological narratives tend to present early works as "immature" and less likely to be labelled as epics, given epic's associations with the highest quality art.[378] Sibelius has not escaped from this narrative, particularly in discussions of his symphonies (including *Kullervo*).[379] However, *Kullervo*'s historical

[377] Matti Huttunen, "The national composer and the idea of Finnishness: Sibelius and the formation of Finnish musical style" in ed. Daniel M. Grimley, *The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 12. Glenda Dawn Goss, "Vienna and the genesis of *Kullervo*: 'Durchführung zum Teufel!'" in ed. Daniel M. Grimley, *The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius*, p. 22. Tomi Mäkelä (trans. Steven Lindberg), *Jean Sibelius* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 196.

[378] Of course, other factors may be involved – such as the labelling of any source texts – but earlier works are typically seen as not displaying the artist's skills at their height. *Kullervo* has been criticised for Sibelius's inexperienced orchestration, which made the woodwind parts particularly challenging to perform, for example, as Goss notes. Glenda Dawn Goss, "Vienna and the genesis of *Kullervo*", p. 26. Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story" in eds. Timothy L. Jackson, Veijo Murtomäki, *Sibelius Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 63.

[379] Sibelius's symphonies have typically been framed as responding to historically contingent compositional problems, with the Sixth (and Seventh) as Sibelius's ultimate symphonic achievement. For example, Lionel Pike saw the symphonies as demonstrating a progression towards greater tonal unity around a single centre, and M. Stuart Collins argues that the First Symphony displays a realisation of tonal tension that would inform similar procedures in the later symphonies. M. Stuart Collins, *The*

position is highly significant: the symphony provides some precursors of the modernist epic, comments on and critiques of pre-existing notions of epic, and problematises the labelling the *Kalevala* as epic. Alongside its monumental reputation, *Kullervo*'s socio-historical position is key to justifying its claims for epic status. Before engaging with *Kullervo*, understanding the *Kalevala*, its history and genesis is essential. Compiled by Elias Lönnrot from folk poetry, the *Kalevala* provides Finland with a mythical past, detailing the adventures of four central heroes. Combining the tasks of inventor and compiler, as Tina Ramnarine observes, Lönnrot's fieldwork resulted in the second (more widely used) edition of the *Kalevala* in 1849.[380] Despite debates around its origins, the *Kalevala* provided the Finnish independence movement with a source of national pride and legitimacy, following Herderian ideology, which stipulated that 'the national soul […] is expressed best in folk poetry' and culture.[381] Inspiring various artworks, the *Kalevala* legitimised Finnish as a 'widespread currency' for the intellectual elite and rural population alike (where it had previously been used predominantly by the latter), and provided Finland with a mythical "golden age".[382] On the surface, the *Kalevala* seems to tick all of the epic boxes.

Viewing the *Kalevala* as an epic poses questions about the meta-category, particularly regarding the relationship between ancient and modern. Although epics are by no

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Orchestral Music of Sibelius, doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, 1973, p. 97. Lionel Pike, "Tonality and Modality in Sibelius's Sixth Symphony" *Tempo*, New Series, no 216 (2001), p. 16.

[380] Tina Karina Ramnarine, *Changing Soundscapes: Music and Identity in Finland*, doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester, 1994, p. 62-63. Juha Pentikäinen and Ritva Poom, *Kalevala Mythology* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1999, revised edition), p. 1-2. Väinö Kaukonen, "The Kalevala as Epic" in ed. Lauri Honko, *Religion, Myth, and Folklore in the World's Epics: The Kalevala and Its Predecessors* (New York: Mounton de Gruyter, 1990), p. 164.

[381] William A. Wilson, "The "Kalevala" and Finnish Politics" *Journal of the Folklore Institute,* vol. 12, no. 2/3 (1975), p. 131. William A. Wilson, "Herder, Folklore and Romantic Nationalism" *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1973), p. 820+832.

[382] W. R. Mead, "Kalevala and the Rise of Finnish Nationality" *Folklore*, vol. 73, no. 4 (1962), p. 221. Juha Pentikäinen and Ritva Poom, *Kalevala Mythology*, p. 1. Tracy X. Karner, "Ideology and nationalism: The Finnish move to independence, 1809-1918" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1991), p. 153.

means understood as histories, they frequently deal with mythical times and events that are retrospectively framed as a nation's early or pre-history.[383] The *Kalevala*, however, was a product of nineteenth century nationalism, which complicates its depiction of Finland's imagined mythical pre-history. Although Lönnrot collected folk tales passed down for generations, the *Kalevala* was not immune to contemporary impulses. Very much of its time, the *Kalevala* is a Romantic work that draws on mythical material (often sharing attributes with ancient epic, such as repeated epithets) and frames it within contemporary concerns (nationalism; sexuality; the modern hero; and the psyche). Yet, immediately after its publication, Finland's intellectual elite were keen to frame the *Kalevala* as rediscovered from an ancient past, consistent with Herderian ideology.[384] In the last half century, however, scholarship has increasingly recognised the particular historical contingency of the *Kalevala* and its dynamic relationship with nationalism. Early nationalism cultivated the conditions for the *Kalevala*'s creation (interest in folk tradition and mythology, popularising folksong collecting), and the *Kalevala* perpetuated nationalistic rhetoric and justified a specifically Finnish brand, part of what Risto Alapuro terms the 'inventing' of the nation.[385] The *Kalevala*'s historical contingency means that it is not an epic according to the ancient ideal, but rather a Romantic interpretation of the meta-category, adapting aspects of the ancient ideal for contemporary purposes.

[383] For example, the legends of King Arthur are a possible pre-history for England, a role that the Icelandic sagas and Greek mythology also play for their respective nations.
[384] This is unsurprising, as Finnish historiographers were as influenced by Hegel and Herder as their continental counterparts, according to Tracy Karner. Tracy X. Karner, "Ideology and nationalism: The Finnish move to independence", p. 158.
[385] Risto Alapuro, "Nineteenth Century Nationalism in Finland: A Comparative Perspective" *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1979), p. 20-21. Tracy X. Karner, "Ideology and nationalism: The Finnish move to independence", p. 152. William A. Wilson, "Sibelius, the *Kalevala,* and Karelianism" in eds. Jill Terry Rudy and Diane Call, *The Marrow of Human Experience* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2006), p. 138.

Subverting ancient epic norms in the nineteenth century was not unheard of, but the Kullervo story is arguably the *Kalevala* tale that most notably challenges the epic label.

Kullervo's story is something of an anomaly. His life is tragic: enslaved as a youth after his family are attacked, Kullervo accidentally seduces his sister, kills his enemies, and commits suicide out of guilt.[386] Kullervo's story echoes parts of the *Nibelungenlied* (as Tomi Mäkelä notes) and Oedipus tales (as Eero Tarasti claims), exploring ideas of forbidden love, revenge, and family loyalty, but they are notably different in how they characterise their heroic figures.[387] Lacking a semi-divine identity and extraordinary talents, Kullervo's actions cultivate disaster and prioritise his personal needs over those of his community. Unsurprisingly, then, Kullervo is usually described as a tragic (rather than epic) hero.[388] While recognising tragedy's undeniable complexity, the Kullervo narrative uses or explores some of its most significant elements, which Blair Hoxby and Adrian Poole identify in tragedy more widely: temptation or misunderstanding triggering tragic events or consequences; the death of (at least) the hero providing a moral lesson; acknowledging that everyone (but perhaps especially the hero) contributes to and is affected by tragic actions and consequences; and blurring the distinction between innocent and guilty.[389] Kullervo's story also engages with several epic conventions, notably the epic proportions of time and space,

[386] For a more detailed account of Kullervo's life see: Daniel R. Perkins, *The Influence of the Kalevala on the Kullervo Symphony Op. 7 of Jean Sibelius*, doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 1990, p. 28. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music: a semiotic approach to the aesthetics of myth in music, especially that of Wagner, Sibelius and Stravinsky* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), p. 224-225.
[387] Tomi Mäkelä, *Jean Sibelius*, p. 193. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 236.
[388] For example: Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius: The Intellectual Genesis of the *Kullervo* Symphony" *19th-Century Music*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2003), p. 50. Veijo Murtomäki, "The problem of narrativity in the symphonic poem *En Saga* by Jean Sibelius" in ed. Eero Tarasti, *Musical Signification: Essays in the Semiotic Theory and Analysis of Music* (Berlin: Mounton de Gruyter, 1995), p. 471. Erik Tawaststjerna (trans. Robert Layton), *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 120.
[389] Blair Hoxby, *What Was Tragedy?*, p. 16+18. Adrian Poole, *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 45-46.

supernatural influences, and a mythic subject. This blending of tragic and epic in Kullervo's character and narrative forms the basis of Sibelius's reading of the Kullervo tale.

Sibelius's view of the Kullervo story adds early modernist sensibilities to the *Kalevala*'s ancient-Romantic tension. The tragedy-epic dynamic at the heart of *Kullervo* explicitly critiques the ancient epic ideal, demonstrating an understanding that classically-conceived epics frequently jar with Romantic and modernist ideals or behaviours. The figure of Kullervo is the locus for expressing this view. Sibelius expands the *Kalevala*'s characterisation of Kullervo as immature, vengeful, and ill-tempered by demonstrating that his tragedy is his fundamental misconception of heroism. Sibelius's reading of Kullervo views heroism following the ancient heroic ideal, with certain obligations (seeking revenge, protecting one's clan) and rights (sexual fulfilment, public adoration) that are out of place in late-Romantic or early modernist society. This temporal disjuncture is key to explaining the link that Kullervo's actions perpetuate between emotional and political violence. Thus, Sibelius frames Kullervo's version of heroism as highly problematic and not admirable, so the tragic mode reveals his "true" nature. Sibelius structures the symphony around this emphasis on tragedy, focusing on the two most tragic moments of Kullervo's life: the seduction of his sister and his suicide. Cultivation of the tragic-epic dynamic in *Kullervo* 'in psychological and realistic terms resonated profoundly with currents emanating from such centers as Vienna and Paris'.[390]

[390] Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", *Jean Sibelius: Kullervo Op. 7* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2005), p. xvii. Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius", p. 68.

However, *Kullervo*'s complexity extends beyond merely being a late-Romantic commentary on ancient epic ideals. Where Sibelius identifies problems with the ancient epic model, he does not necessarily suggest that these problems can be remedied in a late-Romantic or early modern context. Instead, the symphony leaves the listener unsure whether the hints of epic that are present are genuine and trustworthy. It is thus possible to frame *Kullervo* as an early example of an "anti-epic": a work that sets up expectations around the epic meta-category, but subverts them to provide critique, which differentiates it from the non-epic. The anti-epic generates the expectation that it is an epic, whereas the non-epic does not. In a sense, the anti-epic has a lot in common with those works that aspire to be epics without seeming to fully inhabit that role. However, the anti-epic actively denies the possibility of fulfilling its self-perpetuated expectations, rather than simply failing to do so. Regardless of whether the symphony is deemed an epic (or anti-epic), *Kullervo* undoubtedly contributes to one of the most important critical narratives around epic since Milton: how to negotiate the meta-category in light of changes to or abandonment of ancient ideals.

The tragedy-epic dynamic of *Kullervo*

Sibelius's interpretation of the Kullervo story revolves around the interaction and conflict between tragic and epic impulses. This tragedy-epic dynamic shapes how the whole symphony engages with Romantic and early modernist changes to ancient epic ideals, and provides justification for labelling *Kullervo* as an "anti-epic". The tragedy-epic dynamic is best understood as an interaction between tragedy and epic as both narrative categories and modes of expression. The dynamic is the primary means of representing the symphony's conflict between illusion (of heroic glory) and tragic

reality, which Peter Franklin sees as Sibelius problematising heroic masculinity.[391] Although primarily focused on the figure of Kullervo (which is discussed in greater detail below), this conflict informs how *Kullervo* responds to the *Kalevala* tale and its epic label.

Sibelius uses opposing colours (or as Andrew Mellor puts it, 'rough contrasts and abrupt shifts') to characterise tragedy and epic, the former being dark, melancholy, or otherwise "negative", and the latter brighter or otherwise "positive".[392] This is an overly simplistic characterisation of these two modes, since there are very few instances in *Kullervo* that explicitly depict one extreme or the other. The beginning of the fifth movement, for example, is a notable instance of the tragic mode dominating. Instead of using extreme opposites systematically, the tragic and epic modes form a spectrum of mid-tones, with the extremes as imagined poles. Sibelius does not frame either the tragedy or epic modes as absolute, but rather complex categories with diverse and often ambiguous interactions. Actually, the lack of explicit opposition between tragedy and epic in their dynamic is a crucial element for Sibelius's reading of the Kullervo tale as an anti-epic. Tragedy functions as a force that affects epic's ability to live up to expectations of the meta-category. The dynamic is not always at the foreground of the work: while the tragic mode is very prominent at the beginning of the fifth movement, the beginning of the second movement is much more ambiguous, with neither tragic nor epic modes seemingly present. The moods associated with each pole do not work systematically, which emphasises the importance of ambiguity: this dynamic functions as a large-scale evaluation of mood and colour, rather than highly

[391] Illusion and reality is of course a central concern in myth as well as epic. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 19. Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story", p. 70.
[392] Andrew Mellor, "Sibelius's Kullervo" *Gramophone*, July 2019, p. 51.

contrasting local instances. For instance, the opening of the fourth movement presents a bright theme that is interrupted by contrasting, harshly dissonant, almost eerie woodwind trills, but these interruptions are so short and the theme recovers with such ease that they may seem negligible. Even with its inherent level of ambiguity, the dynamic's tragic mode becomes more prominent as the symphony goes on, mirroring the hero's downfall.

The roles and functions of the orchestral and vocal forces provide a key arena for exploring the tragedy-epic dynamic. Only used for those movements that detail Kullervo's encounter with his sister and death, the chorus is absent in movements that depict the mood of a larger swathe of time. Sibelius uses the baritone and soprano soloists even more sparingly, allowing the voices of individual characters only in the third movement. When used, the chorus acts as a narrator for events "as they happen", using a generic sense of archaic music (such as monophonic or octave textures and stepwise motion) to situate the chorus within the Kullervo tale's quasi-mythical time.[393] Meanwhile, Sibelius gives the orchestra a 'narrative function' to comment on and critique the narrative and its associated theoretical or aesthetic basis.[394] Although guided by an (unwritten) programme, the orchestra has greater freedom to present the narrative events with a more critical eye (or 'higher level of conscsiousness') than the texted vocal forces.[395] The orchestra presents the ambiguity between tragedy and epic to a greater extent, while the chorus and soloists are

[393] Eero Tarasti claims that the orchestra is the overall narrator of *Kullervo*, which is a little different from what I am arguing in this chapter. However, Tarasti's point that the orchestra, chorus, and audience exist on different levels of time is important here. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 270.
[394] Ibid, p. 252.
[395] Ibid, p. 270.

constricted by the actions and 'fluctuating emotions' of the narrative's characters.[396] The vocal parts are bound by the *Kalevala*, its depiction of events, and its wider reception history.

Combining different forces with particular archetypes is at the forefront of Sibelius's approach to developing the tragedy-epic dynamic. Interactions between tragic and epic tend to come under five headings, which are described in Figure 5.

Interaction type	Explanation	Example
Accompaniment	One category accompanies another, often based around conventional archetypes	The storm topos accompanying Kullervo's theme at the end of the fifth movement
Interruption	One category prevents the other from establishing itself or continuing	The denied perfect cadence before the fourth movement coda (bars 465-466)
Juxtaposition	Epic and tragedy unable to cooperate, so separated into discrete temporal/structural units	The third choral rotation in the third movement ("epic" in bars 185-197; "tragedy" in bars 204-220)
Conflict	Epic and tragedy combined and battling for prominence	Bars 227-234 of the fourth movement: a moment of tension but with majestic brass and prominent fifth intervals
Non-resolution	An interaction type cannot resolve (typically tonally, but can be in other parameters), so the music simply stops	Between the climax and the return to the opening mood at the end of the second movement (bars 252-256)

Figure 5: The interaction types of the tragedy-epic dynamic.

The diversity of these interaction types, from cooperation to irresolvable conflict, reflects Sibelius's characterisation of tragedy and epic as distinct but related. Each interaction type develops the dynamic into something that replicates the complexity of the tragedy-epic dynamic in *Kullervo*. Frequently, more than one interaction type occur

[396] Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 113.

simultaneously or overlap, so it is often challenging to recognise what aspect of a phrase or passage represents the "tragic" or the "epic". This ambiguity is part of Sibelius's interpretation: tragedy and epic are intertwined and dependent on one another. Some interaction types appear more frequently than others and their distribution varies during the symphony, as Kullervo's actions increasingly lead him towards his 'tragic fate'.[397] Accompaniment is more commonly found towards the beginning of the symphony, while interruption, conflict, and non-resolution are more prominent as the symphony continues and Kullervo's misguided heroic persona starts to have significant tragic consequences. This is an over-simplified description of the dynamic's trajectory, as it is an unstable and ever-changing relationship, but it serves the purpose of showing the increasing emphasis on tragedy as the narrative progresses. The complexity of the dynamic is too great on both macro and micro levels to be outlined in sufficient detail in this thesis, but each movement exhibits notable traits and trends that provide a useful rough mapping of the dynamic across the symphony.

Bookending the symphony, the first and fifth movements provide a "before and after" image of Kullervo and his life, from first an idealised perspective (reflecting generic views of the *Kalevala* as an epic monument) and then having narrated and critiqued Kullervo's tragic exploits. The first movement thus presents the symphony's most idealised image of Kullervo and his life, albeit one not entirely devoid of suggestions of impending tragedy. The "epic" end of the tragedy-epic dynamic is largely foregrounded, so tragedy is mainly an accompaniment, with some occasional interruptions. However, a sense of inevitable conflict between tragedy and epic is

[397] Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 112.

largely absent. Tragedy has not yet developed its destabilising and destructive power. By contrast, the fifth movement presents the protagonist and tale as the antithesis of the idealised opening. Tragedy has "won", but epic is not wholly absent, appearing as the defeated opponent in its battle with tragedy, a shadow of its former confident self.[398] The dynamic thus appears mainly in interaction types that foreground tragedy or show how epic has weakened, especially accompaniment, juxtaposition, and a half-hearted version of conflict. The sharply juxtaposed stormy orchestra and bright choral phrases at the very end of the movement are the main exception to this rule, presenting tragedy and epic as powerful, combative forces.[399] Sibelius challenges the listener either to accept the tragedy of Kullervo's story, or to follow the example of the *Kalevala*'s reception history and return to the illusion of a glorious, nationalistic narrative, a microcosmic version of the symphony's central conflict.

Within the frame of the outer movements, the inner movements show tragedy's gradual rise and epic's attempt to maintain its presence, based around the structural pivot point of the sexual encounter and incest revelation at the centre of the third movement. The second movement primarily sustains epic's presence, but gaps begin to appear in its façade, so tragedy tends to come to the fore in short, sudden bursts (the most substantial of which is the movement's climax around bars 240-255). Interruption and conflict particularly facilitate the tragedy-epic relationship in this movement, although accompaniment maintains a notable prominence. Although there is a sense of epic's idealised image starting to unravel, tragedy has yet to pose a

[398] Erik Tawaststjerna describes this moment: 'the memory of everything evil is expunged' as 'the lament fades away'. Ibid, p. 120.
[399] Ibid.

serious threat until the third movement.[400] On a very broad level, the entire movement is one large juxtaposition of epic in the first half and tragedy in the second, separated by the revelation of incest. Naturally, this characterisation of the third movement is overly simplistic, but it is nonetheless a turning point for the dynamic, with notable use of accompaniment, juxtaposition, and conflict. Despite the heightening of tragedy in the second half of the third movement, the fourth movement presents the symphony's most explicit conflict between tragedy and epic. The whole movement sees epic become increasingly false and inappropriate as an expression of Kullervo's mind, character, and actions. However, instead of retreating, epic presents a heightened version of itself in attempt to reassert its dominance, which is gradually exposed as failing and increasingly disingenuous, as Erik Tawaststjerna suggests.[401] Unlike previous moments of conflict, the epic aesthetic does not "hold its ground", but rather exaggerates its own idealism and unconvincingly tries to cling on. This tactic provides a mirror image of the second movement, where epic does not just suppress tragedy, but also remains in control. The trajectory and development of the epic aesthetic in the fourth movement increasingly suggests panic as tragedy's presence begins to exert greater control, and thus becomes ever more desperate to regain prominence (reflecting Kullervo's 'pride and arrogance', as will be discussed later).[402] Conflict, non-resolution, and juxtaposition – the most antagonistic interactions – are most prominent in the fourth movement, making the movement's mood deliberately disjointed, according to Glenda Dawn Goss.[403] This broad overview shows how the tragedy-epic dynamic responds to Sibelius's vision for the symphony's

[400] Tawaststjerna deems the second movement foreboding and almost 'senses […] Kullervo's tragic fate'. Ibid, p. 112. Andrew Mellor, "Sibelius's Kullervo", p. 51.
[401] Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 117.
[402] Daniel R. Perkins, *The Influence of the Kalevala on the Kullervo Symphony*, p. 44.
[403] Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", p. xv.

central narrative events, and plays into readings of the symphony as an anti-epic. However, to understand how the tragedy-epic dynamic functions, we will examine a few examples that have particular narrative and structural significance for *Kullervo*.

Tragedy's destabilising influence is foregrounded relatively early in the symphony. A significant point of non-resolution occurs at the end of the second movement (bars 252-255), marking the movement's largest climax. The second movement presents Kullervo's troubled childhood as a tableau, rather than attempting 'to follow the narrative of the *Kalevala* story'.[404] So, instead of being a product of narrative events, this climax is cultivated by the tension between tragedy and epic. The non-resolution here is two-fold: firstly, this crisis moment has no tonal closure, as the bass slips from C-natural to B; and secondly, the two *tutti fortissimo* orchestral phrases are followed by single bars of (almost total) silence that force a change of mood. This crisis moment rhythmically recalls the opening lullaby theme material, jarring against the calmness typically expected of lullabies. The violence of this non-resolution lends itself to the tragic mode, with the *fortissimo* dynamic, sudden textural contrasts, and unconventional harmonic progression. Positioning this point of non-resolution here sets up tragedy as a disruptive force: Kullervo's childhood has many hardships, but this crisis moment reveals tragedy's ability to break through the façade of heroism and epic constructed elsewhere. The fact that this outburst of tragic expression cannot be resolved without silence indicates that tragedy has potential to dominate, unable to escape inevitable disaster.

[404] Andrew Barnett, *Sibelius* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 73.

An important interruption (bars 317-322) occurs between the sexual conquest and the soprano's lament during the third movement, marking Kullervo's and his sister's realisation that they have committed incest. On either side of the interruption, "epic" colours and archetypes are more dominant, including fuller textures, prominent melody in octaves, and a level of tonal stability. Bars 317-322, however, almost resemble a prolonged scream: the *fff* upper woodwind and violins are melodically and harmonically very static, high in their registers. The sudden removal of bass colours instils a sense of panic, while the melodic semitone revolving around B suggests an inability to move on, reflecting the incest revelation's detrimental consequences. While committing incest is undoubtedly problematic, the real tragedy of this movement is the sister's subsequent suicide that has yet to take place, so the realisation moment does not derail the whole movement.[405] Arguably, reverting to more "epic" colours following this interruption suggests that the situation may be redeemable. However, the interrupting "scream" destabilises the previous "epic" tone and announces a turning point in Kullervo's narrative, 'a kind of anti-*telos*' in Franklin's view, from which the consequences of his actions start to actively shape his tragic fate.[406]

The overall darkness of the fifth movement illustrates that, at this point, the tragedy-epic dynamic has tipped in favour of the former. Nevertheless, epic still attempts to make an appearance, which demonstrates how Kullervo's legacy seems at odds with his actions. Bars 163-178 offer a useful example. The chorus has finished narrating and

[405] It should be noted that incest is a common trope in myth and sometimes epic, so framing the sister's suicide rather than the incestuous act itself as tragic reflects the alleged mythical origins of the *Kalevala* tale. See: E.M. Melentinskii, "The Incest Archetype in the Folklore Tradition (Especially in the Heroic Myth" *Soviet Anthropology and Archeology*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1987), pp. 21-29.
[406] Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story", p. 71.

lamenting Kullervo's suicide, leaving the orchestra to comment, characterised by low, bass colours and instruments that create an ominous and gloomy atmosphere. A sense of "epic" appears, however, in two notable ways. Firstly, the melody retains the prominence typical of the epic mode. Secondly, although tonally static thanks to a tuba pedal note, the accompaniment highlights intervals of a fourth or fifth, both horizontally (the double bass motion in bars 166^{4}-167^{3}, for example) and vertically (the trombones in bars 163-166). This period of subtle conflict lies outside of Kullervo's lifetime and thus has no direct consequences for the narrative; instead, it reflects on Kullervo's tragic end, which has very little in common with the idealised, epic image that the *Kalevala*'s reception history and symphony's first movement might suggest. This particular conflict lacks intensity or hostility (contrary to what the label "conflict" might suggest): epic and tragedy need not have an antagonistic relationship, but are (in this narrative) somewhat affected by one another. Although tragic colours seem to "win", the continued presence of "epic" post-narrative in some form reflects Kullervo's complicated legacy and the fact that tragedy and epic significantly overlap.

Sibelius avoids characterising tragedy and epic as oppositional by failing to replicate such an overly simplistic duality in their musical characterisation. Instead, Sibelius's cultivation of the tragedy-epic dynamic as an ever-changing narrative and commentary suggests that, in *Kullervo*, epic is not independent from tragedy. They inform one another and their confusion, in Kullervo's eyes, drives the whole narrative and symphony. The dynamic is a critical arena for exploring the idea of *Kullervo* as an anti-epic: in setting up the "epic" soundworld through well-known archetypes and colours, Sibelius highlights how, in *Kullervo*, these archetypes are not present, altered, or combined with others that change their meaning. This is not to say that the early

stages of the symphony presents Kullervo solely through "epic", "heroic", or otherwise "positive" archetypes – even the opening bars have a darkness to them – but rather that the sheer variety of contrasts and diverse moods or colours throughout the work mirror the wide shifts in the narrative and (particularly) Kullervo's character. In doing so, Sibelius's tragedy-epic dynamic presents Kullervo's engagement with heroism as fundamentally flawed because it pursues an image of "epic" that is too insular and independent from other literary categories. The tragedy-epic dynamic is crucial for demonstrating that that flawed image of heroism is part of the story's wider "anti-epic" nature.

Kullervo as tragic protagonist and epic heroic persona

Sibelius's critical engagement with the tragic-epic dynamic in the Kullervo story focuses particularly on how a protagonist can inflict tragedy by adopting an epic heroic persona. Reflecting tragedy's interest in fate and moral agency, Sibelius frames Kullervo as bringing about his own downfall owing to his fundamental misconception of heroism, which leads him to adopt a highly problematic heroic persona. Kullervo's view of heroism draws upon the ancient heroic ideal, but Sibelius frames this aspiration as problematic and described his symphony's approach as 'completely modern'.[407] Sibelius's critical reading of the *Kalevala* transforms the symphony from an archetypal Romantic hero work into a critique of Kullervo that counters the idealisation of the *Kalevala* at that time. Each movement contributes to this critique and shows how Kullervo's idealised image of heroism ultimately leads him to self-

[407] Glenda Dawn Goss, "Vienna and the genesis of *Kullervo*", p. 30. William A. Wilson, "Sibelius, the *Kalevala*, and Karelianism" in ed. Glenda Dawn Goss, *The Sibelius Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 55.

destruct.[408] Sibelius's reading of Kullervo's heroism is an integral part of the symphony's anti-epic characterisation, showing that the expectations of epic are not just implicitly understood or recognised by the audience, but also by the narrative's characters.

Despite few scholarly attempts to problematise Kullervo's heroic label, understanding Kullervo's version of heroism is crucial to Sibelius's interpretation. Many of Kullervo's characteristics match the "Romantic to modernism hero" category: he is selfish, immature, arrogant, and isolated from his community. Although he believes that he inhabits the role by avenging his family's deaths and proving himself in battle, Kullervo's true character sorely lacks aspects of the epic hero paradigm. Kullervo arguably does not undertake a quest: he wreaks havoc, commits incest and murder under the pretence of seeking revenge, and fails to improve the world for his community.[409] Absent from much of his life, he sabotages the relationships with the family members with whom he reunites (especially his sister, as Peter Franklin points out).[410] Arguably, his community actively seeks his isolation, rather than the reverse, a subversion of an epic norm suggesting that the community does not view Kullervo as a hero. Kullervo also lacks an extraordinary quality recognised within the narrative, with the only likely candidate being the strength of his desire for revenge, a theme that critics in the 1860s-80s increasingly highlighted.[411] However, as Glenda Dawn Goss suggests, Kullervo also reflects the tragic hero by adversely affecting his community

[408] Eero Tarasti reads Kullervo's destruction as a result of rebelling against cultural norms, but this reading fails to problematise Kullervo's version of heroism. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 271.
[409] For a useful summary of Kullervo's life, see: Ibid, p. 235-236.
[410] Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story", p. 71.
[411] Glenda Dawn Goss even describes Kullervo as 'inept'. Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius", p. 49+52.

and his "quest" destined to end in disaster.[412] In a sense, Kullervo is a modern reimagining of the tragic hero, as his failures stem from his mental state and misconceptions of ancient heroism.[413]

Kullervo, then, is best understood as a tragic protagonist who assumes an epic heroic persona based on a misconception of an inherited heroic paradigm (found within the *Kalevala* and other epics).[414] While undoubtedly implicated in tragedy, Kullervo confuses the pursuit of glory with violent revenge, heroic status with entitlement, and his individual aims with those of his community. His confusion around his expectations of epic contributes significantly to his tragic decline, supporting an anti-epic reading of the story. Despite fate's influence, Kullervo's faults ultimately lead to his downfall.[415] Kullervo is not an anti-hero because he consciously and willingly assumes a heroic persona. By the fifth movement, Kullervo is fully aware of the damage caused by his heroic aspirations, but earlier movements show the gradual nature of this realisation. Going beyond merely presenting Kullervo as 'overdeterminedly masculine', Sibelius demonstrates how classical conceptions of heroism are unsuitable for the nineteenth century, even through a nationalist lens.[416] Helen Lovatt claims that '[e]pic heroes threaten to become monsters, but end up as monuments', a characterisation that

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[412] Daniel Grimley, "Kullervo" CD liner notes, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Thomas Dausgaard (conductor), recorded May 2018, released July 2019, Hyperion, text available online at https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA68248, accessed 18/11/2019. Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius", p. 50.

[413] Unlike Peter Franklin's view that his sister is responsible for his downfall, Kullervo's misconceptions and failings are the source of his undoing, as they exist long before his encounter with his sister. Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story", p. 73.

[414] The nineteenth-century Finnish curriculum emphasised Latin and Greek, cultivating an awareness of the epic hero tradition.

[415] Erik Tawaststjerna, Veijo Murtomäki, and Andrew Barnett have all highlighted the importance of (and perceptible references to) fate in shaping Kullervo's story. Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 111. Veijo Murtomäki, "The problem of narrativity in the symphonic poem *En Saga* by Jean Sibelius", p. 471. Andrew Barnett, *Sibelius*, p. 74. Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius", p. 52.

[416] Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story", p. 70.

Kullervo largely follows, but what was "normal" and "acceptable" for the ancient hero is almost monstrous in the late-Romantic period.[417] Sibelius depicts Kullervo's misunderstanding of heroism through constant, subtle subversion of archetypal heroic signifiers, impressions of stability, and ideas of truth, illusion, and façade.

Kullervo's theme (Figure 1) is a key arena for Sibelius to demonstrate Kullervo's misinterpretation of heroism and his gradual realisation of his errors. Sibelius himself did not appear to label the theme as Kullervo's theme, but most commentators have done so.[418] The theme does not provide Kullervo with musical or narrative agency, since, apart from a few brief allusions, it appears before and after his lifespan as narrated in the symphony. Instead, the theme represents how Kullervo's mental state and heroic aspirations change during his life. Initially rooted in the tradition of heroic symphony themes, later versions of Kullervo's theme are more unstable and disturbed, reflecting how the tragic hero worsens the situation with their actions. When Sibelius uses or alludes to the theme, it highlights narrative points where Kullervo's misunderstanding of heroism is acted upon or has serious repercussions. This includes points outside of Kullervo's lifespan: the repercussions of his version of heroism continue in the *Kalevala*'s and symphony's reception.

The theme first appears at the start of the introductory, sonata-form first movement, lying outside of the narrative space of Kullervo's lifetime and establishing his heroic persona within the tradition of heroic symphonic themes. Bars 5-23 present the first

[417] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze: Vision, Gender and Narrative in Ancient Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 357.

[418] Traditionally, the main theme of a symphony depicting or involving a heroic figure is labelled as the hero's theme. The fact that Kullervo's theme has followed this norm demonstrates the symphony's framing part of the heroic symphony tradition. Glenda Dawn Goss instead calls the theme the symphony's "motto", which avoids invoking this tradition. Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", p. xi-xiii.

full thematic statement: the first half is characterised by an ascending near-arpeggio (replacing the third with a second), set to an iambic rhythm; the second half features a restless quaver idea, before another octave leap that eventually returns to the tonic.



Figure 6: Kullervo's theme.

On the surface, as Franklin argues, Kullervo's theme conforms to heroic archetypes.[419] Kullervo is established as a Romantic national hero with mythical origins, reflecting the *Kalevala*'s historical contingency.[420] The quasi-mythical character of the theme's modal pitch collection evokes the alleged ancient roots of the *Kalevala* tale, juxtaposed with Romantic hero signifiers (such as allusions to horn calls).[421] The theme's general rising trajectory suggests a sense of striving and yearning for adventure, and the theme "recovers" reasonably quickly from any descent.[422] However, the theme feels

[419] Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story", p. 68.
[420] Or, in Eero Tarasti's words, the theme/symphony attempts to reconcile two expressive spheres (the mythical and "elite" symphonic principles), which reflects the fate of the protagonist. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 223.
[421] Eero Tarasti claims that modal scales and pitch collections 'give the narration an epic flavour'. Ibid, p. 254. Glenda Dawn Goss, "Vienna and the genesis of *Kullervo*", p. 30. Fabian Dahlström and James Hepokoski, "Sibelius, Jean [Johan] (Christian Julius)" Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online (Oxford University Press), http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2709/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043725?rskey=4ryKUe&result=1, accessed 15/04/2018. Tracy X. Karner, "Ideology and nationalism: The Finnish move to independence", p. 153.
[422] Not all renditions of the theme cover the two octave span, which Eero Tarasti terms the theme's 'epic breadth': occasionally, the second half begins an octave lower than Figure 1, so the theme's

disingenuous, almost trying too hard to be the archetypal Romantic hero's theme. For instance, most melodic ascents (typically leaps) are followed by descents (typically stepwise), as if unsure of the ambitious, optimistic steps just taken, so Kullervo's unheroic attributes curb the heroic instinct. While the theme is a largely confident presentation of heroism, the contexts in which it operates typically destabilise Kullervo's hero image, one of the more explicit ways that Sibelius frames the symphony as an anti-epic.

The first presentation of Kullervo's theme immediately sets up the accompaniment as a key source of destabilisation throughout the work. Underneath the clarinet melody, the second violins' and violas' oscillating quavers and tonic pedal pulsing on the half-bar create a sense of restlessness, exacerbated by the more active bass line from bar 13. In bar 9, the cellos introduce a sighing motif, the phrasing of which jars with the melody until bar 19. For the opening statement of a heroic theme, it is not particularly confident. Later versions of the Kullervo theme continue this conflict between the theme and the contexts within which it operates. As Tarasti describes it, Kullervo's theme melodically 'becomes a kind of symbol of the vanished *Kalevala* world, which can later be captured only by reconstructing recollections', embodying the nationalist idealisation of mythical heroes from a lost time.[423] Arguably, the theme's unstable accompaniment reflects late-nineteenth century concerns about the sustainability of evoking the ancient heroic ideal in the modern age.

continual ascension (and associated heroic impulse) is sometimes absent. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 238.

[423] Ibid.

Kullervo's theme's second appearance immediately follows the first (bars 23-38). The strings take up the melody (from first cellos upwards until bar 30^3, then violins only, marked *f*), accompanied by chordal brass (marked *pp*) and a more active bass line that replaces the tonic pedal. From bar 30^3, the woodwind descending quaver idea pre-empts the theme's ascending quaver motion, and the violas and cellos switch from the melody to busy, primarily scalar quavers with greater urgency than their earlier oscillation. Much of this second iteration exaggerates the theme's heroic character, particularly the melody's prominence (louder dynamic, octave texture, greater number of instrumental parts), but Sibelius avoids other heroic signifiers by minimising the role of the brass and not using an overtly heroic rhythmic profile. While the melody continues relatively unaltered, the first half's (bars 23-30^2) almost hymn-like homophony and lack of rhythmic variety contrasts with the second half's (bars 30^3-38) momentum-generating quaver motion. These contrasting rhythmic and textural profiles illustrate Kullervo's changeable, fickle character and counter the heroic ideal's steadfast image. These two versions of Kullervo's theme juxtapose an illusion of heroics (the melody) and a representation of his true nature (the accompaniment). Kullervo's theme sets up the expectation of a heroic persona that he cannot sustain, in the manner of an anti-epic.

The development alludes to the theme's iambic motif three times, setting up expectations of heroic material, only to dash them, foreshadowing the disintegration of Kullervo's heroic aspirations and persona. Within traditional sonata processes, the development's fragmentation of the theme is quite typical, but it has wider significance in contributing to the symphony's large-scale destabilisation of the heroic archetype. The first allusion (bars 128-131) comes towards the beginning of the

development, thus indicating that the development will be interrogating Kullervo's heroic image. Its supporting harmony (a static, unstable seventh chord) and the accompaniment's rhythmic stasis make this first allusion already unconvinced by Kullervo as an unequivocal and unproblematic hero. Bars 172-177 present the second allusion, which marks the start of a passage exploring a new tonal centre (E-flat) and, like the first allusion, evokes stasis through a pedal and shimmering violin triplet idea. The third allusion (bars 296-271) fragments the melodic material, but fails to assert itself and fizzles out. As a contrasting *forte* phrase in the build-up to a local climax at the end of the development, the inability for the thematic allusion to bring about the recapitulation suggests that other, greater forces are at work besides Kullervo. The development essentially uncovers that Kullervo's heroic persona is a delusion. This is reinforced by the fact that each of the development's thematic illusions appears in a different key to presentations of the theme elsewhere in the symphony. Kullervo's theme is most typically linked to the tonal centre of E, so the theme's failure to become more than an allusion in any other key suggests that Kullervo's heroic persona has a strict, fixed musical identity that cannot be upheld when subject to development.

The lack of confidence in Kullervo's heroic persona continues to the end of the first movement, which presents two iterations of Kullervo's theme of differing stability. In bars 495-502, over the tonic (E) and dominant (B) timpani roll, the flutes, oboes, trumpets, and upper trombones carry the melodic line, with a strong, descending, stepwise bass line in the second bassoon, and bass trombone. Besides a lengthy dominant pedal, this sudden grandeur comes out of nowhere (the thin preceding texture is marked *morendo*), and, despite its diatonicism, leads to a passage of harmonic instability. The second iteration (bars 511-518) exaggerates the first, adding

the violins and replacing the bass line with the theme's melody. But instead of facilitating stability, bar 519 arrives on a nine-bar half-diminished V6/4 chord that can only return to the tonic after a four-bar silence. Despite being among the most tonally stable passages in the work, the lack of closure after the theme's illusory grandeur and confidence suggests Kullervo's blindness to the dangers of his heroic persona. Structurally, the theme's lack of closure reflects the inevitability of Kullervo's failures and foreshadows the finale's unsettling conclusion. The end of the first movement thus frames Kullervo's heroic persona as unconvincing and problematic before he is even "alive": even in late-Romantic symphonies, denying tonal closure the end of a movement is unusual. Before his life "begins", Kullervo neither fits into the Romantic-modern hero type nor the ancient heroic ideal to which he aspires, and the listener already knows that his cultivation of a heroic persona will end in tragedy.

By lying outside his lifetime, Kullervo's theme in the introduction encourages questions about his agency. The movements narrating his life do not explicitly use Kullervo's theme, so he does not have agency over his thematic material.[424] Rather, the theme represents a commentary on both Kullervo's highly problematic heroic persona and over-romanticised, nationalistic views of the *Kalevala*. The first movement's presentation of the Kullervo theme comes close to the musical heroic ideal, but still never reaches that idealised, secure space. The versions ending the fifth movement, however, demonstrate Kullervo's frustration and torment from his inability to live up to his self-constructed heroic persona, represented by swirling chromatic strings and (later) woodwind. Following a lifelong cultivation of his heroic persona, Kullervo's

[424] Although brief allusions to the Scotch snap occur in the inner movements, the full theme is conspicuously absent.

perceived failures lead to the self's self-destructing, which materialises in the fifth movement, but is foreshadowed in the conclusion of the first movement.[425] Without his heroic persona and "quest" for revenge, Kullervo's self (before and after his death) is ambiguous. The destruction of the self constitutes the unmasking of Kullervo's flawed heroic persona and its tragic consequences for both him (his loss of self) and his community.

Bypassing his entire lifespan, Kullervo's theme's reappearances in the fifth movement (bars 205-209 and 214-217) follow the same model, a 'defiant […] last statement'.[426] The upper horns, trumpets, and trombone perform the first half of the theme (characterised by the iambic rhythm), accompanied by chordal remaining brass, a relentless tonic (E) and dominant (B) timpani roll, and a double bass descending bass line. Meanwhile, the remaining strings frantically loop fragments of ascending chromatic scales (initially outlining B to E), varying between hemidemisemiquavers and sextuplet demisemiquavers. All parts are marked *fortissimo*. In the second iteration, the woodwind reinforces the chromatic strings (bar the bass clarinet, which replicates the double bass line). Similar to the opening of the first movement, but with greater intensity, the heroic theme is pitted against a turbulent, swirling accompaniment, representing the chaos that Kullervo caused by playing the hero. The juxtaposition of the heroic theme and heightened stormy accompaniment is an explicit embodiment of Sibelius's anti-epic interpretation of the Kullervo story: the theme's references to an archetypally heroic aesthetic set up the expectations around the hero's triumph and "good" morals, which are denied and critiqued by the violence of the accompaniment.

[425] Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story", p. 69.
[426] This passage occurs after Kullervo dies. Notably, the second half of Kullervo's theme only appears in the first movement.

Sibelius highlights the conflict between illusion and reality by interspersing the theme with choral ideas. In brilliant G major (with added sevenths in the woodwind trills), Tarasti notes how the chorus material feels distinctly separated from the delirious orchestral swirling with no communication between them, arguably suggesting that Kullervo continues to be idealised (or idolised) in spite of his problematic heroic persona and its tragic consequences.[427] In a way, the conclusion of the fifth movement is a microcosm of the symphony's primary conflict – between Kullervo's idealised hero image and his true character – and the lack of satisfying tonal closure only reinforces the insincerity of the chorus's brightness. The final bars highlight how Kullervo's terrible deeds and true character do not match the veneration he has received by being part of the *Kalevala*.[428] Sibelius's reflection on the Kullervo tale concludes with an explicit statement of how Kullervo does not fulfil our expectations of the epic hero, of central importance in framing the symphony as an anti-epic.

Sibelius only briefly alludes to *Kullervo*'s motto theme in the inner movements.[429] As Kullervo's theme comments on rather than represents the character, the theme's absence demonstrates Kullervo largely not living up to his idealised image of heroism. Allusions to Kullervo's theme appear at significant narrative points that show Kullervo either acting on or dealing with the repercussions of his conception of heroism, including his seduction of the third maiden and his march to battle. Many of the inner

[427] This is more noticeable with transition from the version of Kullervo's theme in bars 217-218: the switch in material, chord, and mood is instantaneous, as opposed to the previous version, where there is a two-bar cushion before the chorus enters. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 269.

[428] Such veneration is seen in various artworks featuring Kullervo, including those by Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1899 and 1901), Eneas Sjöstrand (1858), and Väinö Blomstedt (1897). Sibelius's critique of Kullervo is all the more ironic for the fact that the symphony itself enjoyed an elevated status in his oeuvre and Finnish national culture as a whole, so he inadvertently contributed to a narrative that he was hoping to deconstruct.

[429] This is not unique to *Kullervo* – Sibelius also only alludes to the motto theme in the outer movements of the First Symphony.

movements' narrative events concern Kullervo's failures and mental instability, so the theme is absent. This is not to say that appearances of Kullervo's theme lack any connection to how Kullervo acts and changes – for example, the turbulent end of the fifth movement – but the theme's absence in the inner movements reflects Kullervo's inability to self-critique. Using the characteristic iambic rhythm for all of the allusions to Kullervo's theme perpetuates Kullervo's lack of self-criticism. The rhythm is one of the theme's more overtly "heroic" signifiers, being both dotted (and thus militaristic in quality) and typically outlining an ascending interval, so its role as a microcosmic version of the full Kullervo theme is an instant reference to Kullervo's immature conception of heroism.

Beyond Kullervo's theme, Sibelius creates conflict between normative symphonic processes and subversions of them to show Kullervo's increasing self-awareness of his flawed heroic persona. Although Andrew Barnett suggests that his point-of-no-return is in the fifth movement, Kullervo's self-awareness of his failings as a hero actually begins in the second movement, while the audience is forewarned in the first movement.[430] The second movement's harmonisation of its lullaby theme is an early indicator of Kullervo's unstable childhood and how it shaped his heroic persona. The movement begins on i6/4, a chord more commonly used as a pivot. As the chord often functions here as a pedal note, prolonging the anticipation of resolution, the theme never feels tonally secure, ironically for a lullaby meant to calm or soothe. Later versions of the lullaby further destabilise this rocky foundation. When it returns at bar 121, the busier texture somewhat obscures the melody, with sudden new tonal centre (B) and *forte* dynamic. Another variation from bar 223 fragments the melody,

[430] Andrew Barnett, *Sibelius*, p. 74.

accompanied by pulsing strings and timpani and an unresolved seventh pedal note (until bar 240). An explosive orchestral *tutti* (bars 252-254) is followed by silence, then a return to the relative calm from the movement's opening, which suggests that Kullervo suppresses rather than deals with the violence and abuse of his childhood. But, alongside the lullaby theme's inherent instability, the low-register, dark colours of the movement's tonal and structural closure ensure that the calm is not entirely convincing: Kullervo is in denial about his tragic youth.[431]

Sibelius's use of the chorus has particular significance for revealing the increasing disparity between Kullervo's illusion of heroism and his reality, which partly explains why the chorus only appears in movements three and five. Particularly in the third movement, the scoring of the chorus evokes a generic, idealised "deep" past through a generic archaic musical aesthetic, like monophonic or octave textures and primarily stepwise repeated tones and phrases.[432] The simultaneously familiar (recognisably referencing early music) and unfamiliar (a style associated with a "deep" past) style of the chorus's narration gives it a mythicising function (or, for Tarasti, an 'epic flavour').[433] Kullervo's pursuit of the maidens is thus framed as reflecting the mythical roots of Kullervo's problematic heroic persona: while the narration's mythical quality echoes Kullervo's idealisation of the ancient hero, it feels somewhat unfamiliar in a

[431] Erik Tawaststjerna characterises the second movement as simultaneously exploring the inevitability of Kullervo's 'tragic fate' and his 'heroic stature'. Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 112.
[432] Eero Tarasti identifies the "mythical" as present from the development of the first movement, but the chorus in the third movement is arguably more explicit. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 242. Tomi Mäkelä, *Jean Sibelius*, p. 187.
[433] The male-voice choir was also an 'important vehicle for national feelings' in the late-nineteenth century, thus suggesting that Kullervo considered himself a hero of (at least) regional importance. Ilkka Oramo and Ilkka Kolehmainen, "Finland [Suomi]" Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2977/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040050?rskey=pnoIl0&result=15#omo-9781561592630-e-0000040050-div2-0000040050.1.4, accessed 16/09/2020. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 254.

largely late-Romantic context.[434] The chorus's archaic quality in the third movement combines the familiar and the unfamiliar to comment on highlight the origins and problems of Kullervo's heroic persona.[435]

The third movement confronts Kullervo's assumption that his heroic status entitles him to sexual gratification.[436] Beginning with an almost innocent dance-like theme, according to Tawaststjerna, Kullervo's growing frustration at being refused by successive maidens comes to dominate the music.[437] The male chorus narrates each of Kullervo's attempted seductions, beginning with the 'Kullervo, Kalervonpoika' epithet.[438] The epithet not only marks Kullervo's pursuit of a new maiden, but also a new musical rotation, as Fabian Dahlström and James Hepokoski observe, returning to the musical material that accompanied the previous attempt.[439] Dahlström and Hepokoski claim that the structural use of the epithet is an early example of Sibelius 'embracing the non-standard formal practice of unfolding ideas in epic or ritualistic semi-parallel cycles'.[440] As Paul Innes notes, epithets or repeated phrases are common

[434] Erik Tawaststjerna describes the second movement's tone repetition, modal character, and rhythmic patterns as having a 'certain antiquated flavouring', which can also apply to the third movement scoring of the chorus. Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 112.
[435] Tina Karina Ramnarine reads the chorus as playing the role of the chorus in Greek drama, so the chorus's textual and narrative functions support Sibelius's musical evocation of a "deep" past. Tina Karina Ramnarine, "An Encounter with the Other: Sibelius, Folk Music and Nationalism" in eds. Veijo Murtomäki, Kari Kilpeläinen, and Risto Väisänen, *Sibelius Forum: Proceedings from The Second International Jean Sibelius Conference, Helsinki, 25-29 Novembe, 1995* (Helsinki: Sibelius Academy, 1998), p. 172.
[436] Kullervo's connection of sexual conquest with heroism is a trope of Greek epic, but Kullervo fails to realise that the hero's heroic status does not solely depend upon the sexual act. For literature on the hero's relationship with sexuality and women, see: Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 265. Dean A. Miller, *The epic hero* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 13.
[437] Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 115. Tomi Mäkelä, *Jean Sibelius*, p. 187.
[438] Besides signalling the start of the three encounters (bars 44, 130, and 185), this phrase is also used in other contexts. Taken directly from the *Kalevala*, the epithet is used each time Kullervo is mentioned by name, a convention of Finnish folk songs, but it acquires an additional structural function in Sibelius's symphony.
[439] Fabian Dahlström and James Hepokoski, "Sibelius, Jean [Johan] (Christian Julius)" Grove Music Online.
[440] Ibid.

formal attributes of epics (related to issues around memorisation), so using the *Kalevala* text here attempts to frame Kullervo's actions within the tradition of epic heroes.[441] This textual choice sets up the expectation of the conventional epic hero.

However, other aspects of the rotations and repetitions of material demonstrate that Kullervo's pursuit of maidens is something more sinister than part of an epic hero's journey. The three rotations have different tonal centres (D, B, and C-sharp), but each emphasises particular scale degrees (through repeated tones or pedal notes) that heighten tension by creating a feeling of stepwise ascension with each opening epithet. The beginning of the first two rotations emphasise A and B respectively (in the chorus's repeated tones), while the second and third rotations emphasise B and C-sharp (in the orchestra's bass and pedal notes). Soloist material intersperses the choral narrations, but Sibelius's use of a musical epithet makes the textual epithet instantly recognisable (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Choral epithet (version from bars 44-46, third movement)

The feeling of the stepwise ascent created by these rotations thus suggests Kullervo's ever greater frustration as he is 'rejected by the first two women he encounters'.[442] The third iteration explicitly shows Kullervo's connection between heroism and sexual prowess: from bar 189-196, the bassoon and cello accompaniment adopts the iambic rhythm that characterises Kullervo's theme (extending to a sixth). Alone, this may

[441] Paul Innes, *Epic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 7.
[442] Daniel Grimley, "Kullervo", CD liner notes.

seem incidental, but an augmented version of the rhythm also appears in the passage depicting the sexual encounter (bars 278-326 according to Goss), such as bars 278 and 288 in the violins and piccolo.[443] Sibelius explicitly points to Kullervo's misunderstanding of heroism by including the iambic rhythm in the musical material relating to Kullervo's incestuous encounter with his sister. The augmentation of the motif twists it almost out of shape to show how Kullervo has bent the ancient heroic ideal to serve his immediate needs, reflecting Kullervo's mindset and beliefs rather than wholly adopting the Wagnerian model of *Tristan*-esque eroticism.[444] Although Kullervo briefly believes he has succeeded in "being a hero", the passage undermines any feeling of "triumph". *Tenuto* markings emphasise the first three beats of the bar, creating a pulsing, foreboding accompaniment on a tonic pedal. The C-sharp minor tonality is simultaneously dark and uncomfortable, as almost the entire orchestra are scored towards the extreme ends of their registers, and often in jarring dissonance with one another (such as the second between the two oboes). This "victory" has as much danger and darkness as it does lush eroticism.

In the third movement lament, Kullervo finally begins to acknowledge how his dangerous heroic persona has shaped his behaviour, a process that Sibelius suggests was inevitable by invoking the idea of fate. Although epic and fate have a long history, Sibelius presents fate here as a tragic device.[445] The lament's F minor key immediately

[443] Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", p. xiv.
[444] Glenda Dawn Goss and Daniel Grimley have both claimed that this section of *Kullervo* is among the 'most explicitly erotic music that Sibelius ever wrote', but it never reaches the extremes of *Tristan*-era Wagner. Daniel Grimley, "Kullervo". Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", p. xiv. Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 116.
[445] Helen Lovatt provides a useful explanation of the role of fate/prophecy in epic: 'Epic is based in the heroic past; prophecy allows the poet to articulate a relationship with the present, the future, and all that comes in between.' Tragedy, meanwhile, frames fate as indicating the inevitability of a particular future, linked to the "wheel of fortune". Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 122. Adrian Poole, *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 7.

sets up its tragic tone, contrasting with the F major opening, as Dahlström and Hepokoski note.[446] Accompanying the baritone (Kullervo) from bar 508, cataclysmic orchestral 'violent hammer-blow chords' depict fate, breaking up a largely monophonic texture: Kullervo faces his inevitable downfall alone.[447] The orchestra thus becomes the 'unconscious' voice of doom that Kullervo simultaneously acknowledges and attempts to drown out with his lament.[448] Kullervo's despair becomes anger by bar 537; the lower brass, timpani, and double bass evoke a storm topos with dramatic, violent swells that mirror Kullervo's existential crisis.[449] At bar 576, an eight-bar F minor chord marks the crisis's climax, distorted by upper woodwind trills onto a minor second (G-flat), with added tension from *tremolo* strings. Following his resolve to finally avenge his family's murder, this climactic moment of tension and tragedy marks the Kullervo's point-of-no-return. His heroic persona and sense of self are irreparably damaged. The final three hammer blows (bars 584-588) seal Kullervo's tragic fate. The third movement's focus on such a short period elevates its narrative importance, but Kullervo's lament serves to expose the central conflict of the tale (Kullervo's heroic persona versus his true character) and dramatises the most spectacular moment of his self's destruction.

Erik Tawaststjerna attributes the lament's F minor tonality to the third movement's cyclical tonal structure, but it may have wider significance.[450] Kullervo's lament is the

[446] Fabian Dahlström and James Hepokoski, "Sibelius, Jean [Johan] (Christian Julius)" Grove Music Online.
[447] Andrew Barnett, *Sibelius*, p. 73.
[448] Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 252.
[449] In his lament, Kullervos regrets that he grew up to be so 'wretched' and claims that death has treated him wrongly. For a translation of the text, see: The LiederNet Archive, "Kullervo and his sister" translation by William Kirby, last modified 16/06/2014, available at https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=53644, accessed 17/10/2019.
[450] Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 114.

main section of the symphony where the protagonist expresses his thoughts and feelings directly to the listener, so the E minor key of Kullervo's theme might be expected.[451] Instead, the choice of F for the lament shows that Kullervo does not live up to his heroic ideal, reflecting the symphony's wider tendency to blur seemingly stable features with semitones to show the narrative's generic or categorical ambiguity (including regarding the epic). Following the incestuous encounter, almost all of the trills use semitones instead of tones, which destabilise their supporting, typically triadic harmonies. Examples include the woodwind trills to G-flat in the third movement's final hammer blows, and the flute and piccolo G to A-flat trills in bars 8-9 and 12-13 of the fourth movement. These semitone "blurrings" are part of Sibelius's wider use of dissonance to indicate Kullervo's unstable mental state, especially when that dissonance upsets conventional triadic harmony at key structural moments (as with the third movement hammer blows). Further diatonic moments (such as the G major choral phrases in the finale) sound out of place, even sinister in their conventionality. The end of the third movement shows the extent to which Kullervo's failures torment him, but he is unable to recognise that his heroic persona has caused his problems. From the quasi-F-minor hammer blows at the end of the third movement, Kullervo's 'slide into disorder' accelerates by making the familiar feel unfamiliar.[452]

Considering that Kullervo is preparing for battle, the fourth movement's disconcerting juxtaposition of light-hearted and disturbing moods encourages the listener to question the sincerity of the former. Following the example of Tchaikovsky's Sixth and

[451] All of Kullervo's themes appearances (beyond mere allusions) are scored in E minor, so it is not unreasonable to connect the key to representations of Kullervo's character.
[452] Fabian Dahlström and James Hepokoski, "Sibelius, Jean [Johan] (Christian Julius)" Grove Music Online.

Brahms' Fourth Symphonies, the movement is a march-to-battle sequence. Scalar and mostly diatonic, the dance-like theme attempts to maintain Kullervo's heroic façade (Figure 8), but its bright character often jars with supporting textures.



Figure 8: Fourth movement main theme (version from bars 5-8)

In bars 164-172, for example, the violin melody's carefree quality contrasts with the high-register, frenzied flute, piccolo, first clarinet, and (occasionally) bassoon semiquavers, and the lack of bass timbres exaggerates the passage's shrill, panicked character. Kullervo's optimism begins to fade as the movement continues, moving away from epic's trope of triumph in battle and closer to tragedy's misunderstanding of an action's consequences. The massacre is not scored at all: the heroic façade cannot accompany Kullervo's non-heroic actions.[453] The movement's juxtaposed moods represent the extreme instability of Kullervo's mental state at this point in the narrative, veering from a 'reckless bravado' to dark, turbulent quasi-delirium.[454] Kullervo's tragic misunderstanding of heroism becomes undeniable and unavoidable through his extreme mental states.

Towards the centre of the fourth movement, the tone becomes more martial, with increasing dotted rhythms, fifth-based motifs, and a chaotic, busy texture. In bars 299-309, the brass, woodwind (except flutes), and lower strings introduce an augmented

[453] Tomi Mäkelä argues that 'Kullervo's war against the enemy is purely symphonic', but I view this movement as part of the tradition of "preparing for battle", rather than underscoring the battle itself. Tomi Mäkelä, *Jean Sibelius*, p. 185.
[454] Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 260.

version of the Kullervo theme's iambic rhythms, attempting to assert Kullervo's heroic qualities amongst the chaos. The iambic rhythm is sustained over three bars, followed by a one-bar woodwind motif from the fourth movement's main theme. This taunting four-bar phrase occurs twice more before landing on the same chord that accompanies the iambic rhythm, so not actually achieving resolution. Kullervo's constant battle to maintain his heroic façade undergoes a crisis moment and cannot wholly reassert itself; instead the music falls into near silence in bars 311-315. Sibelius frequently uses silence to "reset" or bring about change instead of the more typical harmonic or tonal resolution. For bars 311-315, the near-silence indicates that Kullervo cannot frame his intentions in a heroic fashion, with the "reality" of the situation depicted by the ominous, foreboding solo timpani roll. Instead, the iambic rhythm allusions are silenced before they can develop into a fully-fledged heroic rendition of Kullervo's theme. This is another small-scale manifestation of Sibelius's anti-epic reading of the Kullervo tale, limiting allusions to the heroic theme to demonstrate that Kullervo does not inhabit the role of the hero as epic conventions dictate.

The last hundred bars or so of the fourth movement evoke Kullervo's increasing desperation to avoid confronting his dangerous actions and tragic fate. Prior to the 'Vivace' (bar 466), a gradual *stringendo* (from *piano*) and a clear, conventionally prepared, perfect cadence anticipate a dazzling coda. However, this expectation is subverted: the missing third and fifth denies the perfect cadence; the *pizzicato* strings create a thin, almost half-hearted texture; the 45-bar tonic pedal undermines surface-level attempts to create a local climax; and the woodwind and brass recycle motivic material, echoing the tonal stasis. For example, mirroring the pedal note's harmonic stasis, the repetition of the opening cell of the movement's main theme between the

trumpets in bars 498-507 generates a sense of aimless momentum, representative of Tarasti's argument that the whole movement seems relatively static in spite of its impression of energy.[455] The music's refusal to facilitate melodic closure reveals Kullervo's gradual realisation that destroying his enemies will not bring him peace. In bar 514, the tonal centre suddenly switches to A-flat, with the chromatically altered pedal note (C-flat) strongly emphasising the minor mode.[456] While short-lived, two further occurrences of the tonal shift (bars 523-525 and 535-539) destabilise the coda's tonic grounding. Within this context, the final twenty-four bars of emphatic C major feel forced. An exaggerated declaration of military "triumph", the end of the coda attempts to disguise the lack of tonal closure and distract from the movement's moments of crisis. Having returned to the "home" key (unusually following symphonic convention), the emphatic reiteration of the tonic is conventional on the surface, but does not resolve the underlying tonal narrative, exposing Kullervo's positive façade in (ironically) the most assertive fashion. Despite its triumphant appearance, the deceptiveness of the fourth movement's conclusion is a crucial moment in *Kullervo*'s playing-out of the dynamic between epic and tragedy.

Kullervo and the monumentalisation of the *Kalevala*

While composing *Kullervo*, Sibelius had a heightened awareness of the significance of the *Kalevala* – and thus, the Kullervo story 'charged with political implications' – to the Finnish nation and people.[457] By the time that Sibelius engaged with the *Kalevala*, it was 'a product of the geopolitical reality', long grounded in the public imagination and the nationalistic Finnish independence movement, which has been reflected in

[455] Ibid.
[456] This is another element reminiscent of Brahms' Fourth Symphony.
[457] Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius", p. 63. Matti Huttunen, "The national composer and the idea of Finnishness", p. 7.

Kullervo's monumentalisation.[458] There are three primary qualities that cultural monuments possess. They are aspirational; they construct an illusion of permanence, a timelessness that suggests both not really existing in time and being universally "relevant"; and they are elevated above other cultural works.[459] Monuments assert the presence of the past in the present and (imagined) future, blurring temporal boundaries and exerting power in cultural arenas. Arguably, the story of *Kullervo* in the *Kalevala* was already a monument before Sibelius depicted it in music. In writing *Kullervo*, according to Goss, Sibelius felt pressure in engaging with and thus could not avoid the *Kalevala*'s monumental reputation, which has greatly affected the symphony's own reception history.[460] The *Kalevala*'s monumentality has translated into the tragedy-epic dynamic and Kullervo's characterisation as a tragic hero and epic hero persona, failing to live up to monumental expectations. However, the *Kalevala*'s monumentality has also had significant implications for how other epic parameters function in *Kullervo*, including time and scale. Moreover, *Kullervo* has affected monumentalisation of the *Kalevala* in return: the relationship is somewhat reciprocal.[461] While the Finnish press were quick to claim *Kullervo* as a highly "Finnish" work at the premiere (as noted by Daniel Grimley, for instance), Sibelius problematises the Kullervo story and its epic attributes, instead framing the symphony as both an

[458] Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius", p. 53. Daniel Grimley, "Kullervo".
[459] In his "Introduction", Alexander Rehding presents a compelling argument for the assumed relationship between scale and cultural value or status, as well as lamenting the absence of 'a comprehensive taxonomy of musical monumentality' in musicological discourse. Rehding's initial discussion does lack some clarity regarding the role of time within monumentality, but nonetheless provides a useful acknowledgement of the category's complexities and definitional difficulties. Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 3-17.
[460] Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", pg xiii.
[461] This is particularly the case for the immediate post-premiere reception. Erik Tawaststjerna notes how the symphony was part of a trend of reinvigorated interest in the *Kalevala* following a lull in its cultural presence in the years immediately preceding the symphony. However, as Daniel Perkins has noted, very few twentieth-century Finnish composers have engaged with the Kalevala as a compositional source, perhaps viewing it as 'too monumental'. Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 122. Daniel R. Perkins, *The Influence of the Kalevala on the Kullervo Symphony*, p. 72.

"anti-epic" and an "anti-monument".[462] "Anti-monument" should be understood as a work that sets up expectations as monumental or monumentalising a related object, but then subverts those expectations to problematise that monumentalisation. Being an anti-monument contributes to *Kullervo'*s characterisation as an anti-epic. Although not all monuments are epics, epics are typically monuments, which critics typically highlight in terms of time as cultural epistemology. Discussions of epics as monuments thus tend to highlight aspects of monumentalisation that deal with time (illusion of permanence, timelessness), but *Kullervo* functions within a highly complex sense of time that it cannot unequivocally fulfil the demands placed on epic monuments.

Assessing *Kullervo'*s engagement with the epic meta-category must confront whether it is internal content or external reputation that characterises the symphony as a monument. Because *Kullervo*'s status has evolved and the work only deals with part of the *Kalevala*, it is overly simplistic to deem *Kullervo* an epic monument based on its *Kalevala* associations alone.[463] However, it is significant that the process of monumentalising *Kullervo* as 'national myth' began from its premiere, rather than being retrospectively applied.[464] As Goss notes, *Kullervo'*s premiere was arguably the height of the work's popularity, as critics started to find fault and curb their enthusiasm just a few months later, and the work has only recently regained its initial elevated position.[465] This initial reaction has contributed to persisting critical interest in

[462] Daniel Grimley, "Kullervo", CD liner notes.
[463] Although, as Glenda Dawn Goss notes, other Kullervo-retellings produced around the same time followed the norm of framing the story as patriotic, based on the *Kalevala*'s importance for ideas of national awakening and consciousness. Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius", p. 53.
[464] Matti Huttunen, "The national composer and the idea of Finnishness", p. 12.
[465] Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", p. xv.

Kullervo, notably including the work of Glenda Dawn Goss.[466] Sibelius's own monumentalisation (as Finnish music's "father figure") and his music has not resulted in equal critical attention, so *Kullervo*'s notable elevation among the symphonic poems demonstrates how links to epic texts can provide the incentive for monumentalisation and critical interest. There has been little questioning of the assumed continuation of *Kullervo*'s initial post-premiere success, relying on existing assumptions about the symphony's monument status to justify paying the work critical attention. What pre-existing discussions of *Kullervo* show is that the *Kalevala* and its historical associations with nationalist ideology play a critical role in the symphony's reception history, particularly its significance for Sibelius as his "breakthrough" work.[467] However, *Kullervo*'s monument status is highly complex and should not be taken for granted, because, as an anti-epic, *Kullervo* ultimately critiques the story on which it is based. The assumption that Sibelius's symphony merely reproduces the narrative and nationalistic significance of the *Kalevala* story has led to *Kullervo*'s seemingly automatic monumentalisation.

Beyond reception history, however, *Kullervo* contains features that demonstrate Sibelius's awareness of the *Kalevala*'s monumentality and his concern that the Kullervo story should receive the same treatment. Not only does the symphony follow a *Kalevala* tales, it also uses text taken directly from the epic. Viewed in the nineteenth century as evidence of Finland's legitimacy as a nation (in having a mythical pre-history), as Juha Pentikäinen and Ritva Poom argue, the *Kalevala* had an elevated status, but Sibelius's choice of the Kullervo story shows a certain scepticism about

[466] Such as the *Lemminkäinen Suite* and *Tapiola*, but *Kullervo*'s critical assessment pales in comparison to discussions of the symphonies and the most overtly nationalistic works, like *Finlandia*.
[467] See: Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface". Daniel Grimley, "Kullervo", CD liner notes.

nationalist thought, notably by depicting failures and a self-interested protagonist.[468] The narrative also lacks the image of the "golden age" associated with nationalistic art.[469] Nevertheless, Sibelius amplifies some of the symphony's national myth aspects. For instance, Glenda Dawn Goss notes how Sibelius's setting of the *Kalevala* text reproduces the stress-patterns and phrasing of Finnish folk music.[470] However, scholarship on *Kullervo* has been preoccupied with identifying pre-existing folk music links.[471] While Sibelius appears to have actively avoided exact quotations, Goss claims that many of Sibelius's initial and eventual thematic ideas for *Kullervo* notably resemble two specific Finnish folk melodies.[472] Goss argues that Sibelius had had previous contact with both melodies – he had used them in the *Allegro* for brass septet and triangle – but the differences between Sibelius's theme and the original song are substantial enough to question a speculative argument.[473] The almost obsessive need to locate "Finnishness" in *Kullervo* by critics (both contemporary with Sibelius and later, which both Andrew Barnett and Glenda Dawn Goss recognise) demonstrates that a connection between the symphony and the romanticised Finnish nationalist ideal is presumed and *Kullervo*'s nationalistic significance is arguably exaggerated.[474] Although folk music quotations are by no means the only means of nationalist representation, Daniel Perkins argues that Sibelius's avoidance of such material

[468] Juha Pentikäinen and Ritva Poom, *Kalevala Mythology*, p. 1. Steven Grosby, *Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 9-10.
[469] Matthew Riley and Anthony D. Smith are among the many scholars who discuss the idea of past heroes embodying a nation's "golden age". Matthew Riley and Anthony D. Smith, *Nation and Classical Music: From Handel to Copland* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), p. 139.
[470] Glenda Dawn Goss, "A Backdrop for Young Sibelius", p. 64.
[471] For example: Tina Karina Ramnarine, "An Encounter with the Other: Sibelius, Folk Music and Nationalism", p. 172.
[472] Daniel R. Perkins, *The Influence of the Kalevala on the Kullervo Symphony*, p. 55. Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", p. xi.
[473] Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", p. xii.
[474] Andrew Barnett, *Sibelius*, p. 74. Glenda Dawn Goss, "Preface", p. xv.

demonstrates a reluctance to explicitly voice nationalistic sentiments.[475] Describing *Kullervo* as distinctly "Finnish" is thus a difficult argument to sustain, despite its heavy emphasis in discussions of the symphony's monumentalisation.

The *Kalevala*'s unique historicity provides another contributing factor to *Kullervo*'s monumentalisation for Sibelius to critique. As a Romantic nationalist work that presents mythical tales, the *Kalevala*'s reverence for ancient times may reflect nationalist ideology, but also provides material for Sibelius to develop *Kullervo's* central illusion-reality binary. By foregrounding Kullervo's problematic engagement with ancient culture, Sibelius critiques idealisation of the past and the role of epic distance in that practice. Much of this critique is achieved by emphasising the "re-telling" of the Kullervo narrative, which highlights its "pastness" and distance from the audience.[476] Sibelius sets up *Kullervo* as a "re-telling" from the outset, framing the work with an introductory prologue and an epilogue at the end of the fifth movement (from bar 163) that lie outside of the time span of Kullervo's life. The structural separation of the prologue and epilogue (as a separate movement and a coda section respectively) distances the narration from the narrative, taking place in different times and spaces, and also indicates that the narrative requires both introducing and reflection. The framing device thus generates tension between the tale and its re-telling: impressions of distance and need for evaluation suggests potential unreliability or miscommunication, somewhat subverting the archetype of the epic as universally understood and relevant. Distance between the tale and the telling also situates the

[475] Daniel R. Perkins, *The Influence of the Kalevala on the Kullervo Symphony*, p. 55. Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 97.

[476] Peter Franklin deems the symphony to be a 'telling' rather than a "re-telling", but as the symphony is based on an existing textual work, I prefer the latter term. Peter Franklin, "Kullervo's problem – Kullervo's story", p. 71.

former in a specific temporality, while the latter is temporally detached. Despite its structural separation, the stylistic differences between the framing space and central narrative are minimal, so the distance between tale and telling is not necessarily as stark as their structural division may suggest. Juxtaposing the narrative and the narration thus poses the question of whether Kullervo's downfall is only possible in a distant mythical realm, or could occur in the listener's own environment. Sibelius breaks down the idea of epic distance and encourages the question of whether Kullervo's actions contribute to the story's monumentalisation because of their nature or "pastness", which he frames as problematic. Sibelius's meditation on the *Kalevala*'s unique historicity is integral to the symphony's anti-epic characterisation, as the disjuncture between mythical and Romantic society and culture helps to facilitate Kullervo's downfall.

However, the "re-telling" in *Kullervo* does not solely rely on articulating particular narrative events or devices to critique the tale's monumentalisation. The second and fourth movements are less prescriptive in their narration of events than the third and fifth movements. Previous analyses of *Kullervo*, such as that by Andrew Barnett, have tended to frame the second and fourth movements as quasi-tableaux that provide broad pictures of phases of Kullervo's life, rather than marking specific narrative events.[477] The tableau style reflects epic's 'expansive temporality' whereby long periods are glossed over, while more detailed narration is provided for the plot's key moments or turning points.[478] Larger swathes of time are represented primarily by

[477] Andrew Barnett, *Sibelius*, p. 73-74.
[478] Allison Portnow, *Epic Time and Narrativity in Jean Sibelius's* Lemminkäinen Suite, Masters dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2007, p. 39.

varying moods cultivated by the tragedy-epic dynamic.[479] Both the second and fourth movements have clear structural climaxes, but seemingly no obvious, corresponding narrative highpoint, so their narrative significance is indicated by how they begin and end. The second movement starts and finishes with the same material in an almost identical orchestration, which suggests the futility of the movement's turmoil, echoing how Kullervo's early years brought him neither self-improvement nor wisdom. The fourth movement, however, forces its conclusion, presenting a misleading sense of triumph (see above). Sibelius encourages the listener to question whether the moods presented are genuine or ironic by making the source of these moods ambiguous. Without the chorus's objective narration, the second and fourth movements are more sympathetic towards Kullervo's own thoughts and feelings. The tableau style, then, conceals a struggle between a critique of the action and a portrayal of Kullervo in accordance with his epic heroic persona. As a march-to-battle movement, the fourth movement does not depict the massacre that takes place in the *Kalevala* text, yet the hollow triumph at the end of the movement suggests victory. Kullervo's self-denial distorts time, attaching a temporal period onto the end of the fourth movement to serve an (unconvincing) elevating purpose. Sibelius uses Kullervo's voice to shape his treatment of narrative time, but uses the orchestra's commenting power to show how unconvincing and unreliable Kullervo's voice is in presenting the "truth". Earlier monumentalisation of *Kullervo* is thus retrospectively framed as misleading, re-characterising the symphony as an anti-monument.

[479] According to Allison Portnow, Sibelius famously said that the *Kalevala* stories were 'far less important than the moods and atmospheres conveyed'. Allison Portnow, *Epic Time and Narrativity*, p. 20.

The "objective" narrators of *Kullervo* – the all-male chorus – also present conflicting temporal ideas that challenge the notion of epic distance and encourage viewing the Kullervo tale in light of the *Kalevala*'s role in developing Finland as a nation. As Sibelius was one of the first composers to use Finnish for the chorus and soloists, the language had reached a key point in its history by becoming widespread enough to feature in popular artworks. While this may appear to be simply a nationalistic gesture, the use of Finnish connects the Kullervo story with the wider Finnish community, who 'actively participate in the creation' of their exclusive communal mythology.[480] Language here signals ownership, particularly as Sibelius's text-setting mirrors the conventions of a specifically Finnish brand of folktale, like the epithets that refer to particular characters (as Daniel Grimley details).[481] Although it may be *told* by anyone, this assertion of Finnish culture frames the Kullervo tale as concerning and originating from a specific community outside of the narrative, a notable feature of epics. Locating this community historically through language elevates the Kullervo story, but creates ambiguity around the work's cultivation of epic distance. Although idealising Finnish as the language of an 'ancient […] community', the use of Finnish to narrate (and provide direct speech by the soloists) also articulates the Romantic elevation of the language.[482] Previously spoken by only rural communities, Finnish became the national language comparatively recently, so its use for *Kullervo* collapses the distance between the tale and the audience, becoming 'the music of a living community'.[483] Like other aspects of *Kullervo* and the *Kalevala*, Sibelius's language choice has conflicting

[480] Tracy X. Karner, "Ideology and nationalism: The Finnish move to independence", p. 152-156.
[481] Epithets or repeated phrases are common in epics outside of Finnish folk literature, but the latter tends to use them more specifically for identifying characters. Daniel Grimley, "Kullervo", CD liner notes. Matti Huttunen, "The national composer and the idea of Finnishness", p. 8.
[482] Eero Tarasti, *Myth and music*, p. 233.
[483] Daniel R. Perkins, *The Influence of the Kalevala on the Kullervo Symphony*, p. 7+21. Tracy X. Karner, "Ideology and nationalism: The Finnish move to independence", p. 159.

attached ideologies or cultural meanings – in this case, being simultaneously mythical and nationalistic – that problematise simplistic monumentalisation of the symphony, based on its of an allegedly ancient narrative.

The monumentalisation of *Kullervo*, then, seen 'with the benefit of historical distance', has relied upon certain expectations of a work based around nationalist ideology.[484] Kullervo's exploits do not glorify the nation beyond providing a mythical pre-history, nor does he function as a national hero. Sibelius acknowledged that the Kullervo tale was previously and continued to be monumentalised (with the juxtaposed stormy orchestra and bright, quasi-triumphant orchestra at the very end as the most explicit statement of this), but idealised passages almost invariably sound disingenuous or ironic. Similarly, Kullervo's theme fails to function as an archetypal heroic theme and Sibelius's depiction of the protagonist's self-centred nature shows that the community and region of the tale (representing the Finnish nation) are secondary to fulfilling heroic ambitions. Instead of perpetuating elevating tendencies, Sibelius encourages the listener to question their preconceptions about the Kullervo narrative, thus problematising its historical monumentalisation.[485] Temporality is perhaps the most critically neglected aspect of *Kullervo* that contributes to that problematisation. Sibelius does not set up ancient and Romantic as opposites, but rather shows the difficulty of considering them on the same terms. Myth's elevated status in the nineteenth century (including within musical circles, as Daniel Perkins notes) partly accounts for the symphony's immediate reception, but this elevation is an idealised

[484] Daniel Grimley, "Kullervo", CD liner notes.
[485] This is not to say that nationalist art or mythology cannot contain tragic narratives. Rather, the tragic elements of *Kullervo* detract from elevation of the nation.

kind, which was increasingly recognised in the twentieth century.[486] *Kullervo* is simultaneously invoked as part of the monumentalisation of the *Kalevala* and an "anti-monument" in its own right.

Conclusion

Kullervo is a work whose claim for epic status is determined more by its reception than its musical content. Sibelius's setting of the Kullervo tale demonstrates an interest in exploring the narrative beyond its surface and using music to question existing assumptions about both the work's events and its wider reception history. Very little of *Kullervo* can be taken at face-value, as the subversion of epic tropes (whether large- or small-scale, subtle or explicit) is part of the symphony's questioning of whether Kullervo merits the monumentalisation he has received as a *Kalevala* protagonist. Sibelius's reading of Kullervo was remarkably modern for its time in framing his downfall as a result of his own misconceptions and mental instability. Kullervo's misunderstanding of the ancient heroic ideal informs the hero concept in the symphony, reflecting the fact that the ideal had not disappeared entirely. *Kullervo*'s reception demonstrates how modernist takes on the hero and the epic were initially overshadowed by the continued influence of Romantic nationalism and its veneration of mythology, as Finland relied on the *Kalevala* for legitimacy (as Tracy Karner argues).[487]

Although Kullervo is the locus for much of the symphony's critique of out-dated notions of the epic, he is by no means the only aspect of the work that functions in this way. The ambiguity of the narrative voice plays a significant role: the listener is not

[486] Daniel R. Perkins, *The Influence of the Kalevala on the Kullervo Symphony*, p. 26.
[487] Tracy X. Karner, "Ideology and nationalism: The Finnish move to independence", p. 161.

always sure of whether the music is telling the truth or presenting an illusion, so much of *Kullervo*'s critique is so subtle that the listener may not even be aware of it happening. However, once *Kullervo* is understood as a critique of epic, however, the listener acquires a heightened awareness of the balance between idealised illusion and more complex reality, and it seems all the more ironic that it has since been labelled as a work that represents ideologies or beliefs that it problematises. Sibelius had inherited conceptions of epic that were overly optimistic and idealised – the admirable hero, the grand quest, the panoramic landscape, the overwhelming triumph – and he exposes these as false and illusory in the time in which he was writing. In highlighting the tragic aspects of the Kullervo narrative alongside the epic, Sibelius encourages appraisal of the tale more in line with early modern thought and practices. For such a forward-looking work (in many ways), it is notable how much of *Kullervo*'s reception history has been dominated by its immediate post-premiere response.[488] *Kullervo*'s "cultural epistemology" gives a misleading impression of the symphony as functioning as an epic, when, in fact, it fulfils the role of "anti-epic" to a greater extent.

[488] See, for instance: Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius: 1865-1905, Volume 1*, p. 106-107.

Chapter Four: Mahler's *Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection"*: The Epic in Transition

Introduction

Subtitled the *Resurrection*, Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* actively engages with the epic meta-category at a particularly intense period of transition in its history. Long associated with monumentality or enormous scale, taking the symphonic form 'to extremes', Mahler's early understanding of the epic goes far beyond merely large scale.[489] The *Resurrection* includes and meditates on ideas of the hero, mythology, fairy tale, struggle, and epic scale, with clear influence from Wagner and Liszt. But Mahler takes these ideas and combines them with themes and devices of great interest during the transition phase between Romanticism and modernism, including the connections between the mortal and divine worlds, ideas around dreams, and mental struggle. Thus, examining the *Resurrection* provides a useful insight into the epic meta-category at a particularly notable period of both cultural and ideological transition at the turn of the twentieth century.

The reasons for considering the *Resurrection*'s engagement with the epic meta-category are four-fold. Firstly, Norman Lebrecht observes that Mahler still greatly admired Wagner's work at this stage in his life, so the *Resurrection* provides an example of an immediate response to Wagner's work around the epic meta-category.[490] Secondly, the centrality of Mahler's music in the absolute-programmatic dichotomy (or false dichotomy, according to Vera Micznik) has important implications

[489] Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler? How One Man and Ten Symphonies Changed the World* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 6. Deryck Cooke, *Gustav Mahler* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 93. Richard Taruskin, *Music in the early twentieth century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 44.
[490] Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler?*, p. 40.

for music's relationship with the epic meta-category.[491] Thirdly, the *Resurrection* was the first Mahler symphony to be recorded, and has been credited with establishing the careers of particular conductors (such as Simon Rattle, as Lebrecht points out) and performers, which has mythologised the work in the performance sphere.[492] And lastly, reception of the *Resurrection* across both scholarly and popular spheres has long invoked ideas associated with the epic.[493] Mahler's early symphonies contain the roots of post-Wagner musical engagement with the epic meta-category, which were refined in his later works and inspired generations of composers to come.[494] Mahler thus occupies a key position in the response to Wagner's ideas around music and the epic meta-category, which echoes Mahler's wider critical characterisation (reflected in Peter Franklin's *Grove* article) as a transitional figure.[495]

In pre-existing critical literature, discussions of Mahler's engagement with the epic meta-category (although rarely using the phrase) to a large extent are in terms of scale. Discussing Mahler's *Wunderhorn* symphonies, Byron Almén neatly summarises views of Mahler in the second half of the twentieth century:

> There is something undeniably grand about the symphonies of Gustav Mahler. Their popularity with modern concert audiences, their pride of place in the orchestral repertoire, and their continuing presence on the

[491] Vera Micznik, "Music and aesthetics: the programmatic issue" in ed. Jeremy Barham, *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 38.
[492] James M. Keller, "Mahler Symphony No. 2, *Resurrection*", programme note for New York Philharmonic performances, September 2011, available online at https://nyphil.org/~/media/pdfs/watch-listen/commercial-recordings/1112/release10.pdf, accessed 23/11/2018, p. 10. Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler?*, p. 90.
[493] See discussion of epic "impulse", "scale" etc. above.
[494] Norman Lebrecht particularly notes Mahler's influence on film music. Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler?*, p. 5.
[495] Peter Franklin, "Mahler, Gustav" *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, available at http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2709/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040696?rskey=uDRcze&result=1, accessed 15/04/2018.

> best-seller lists of classical music recordings lend credence to the view that Mahler's music has acquired a sort of mythic resonance within Western society. The appeal of these symphonies can probably be traced to multiple factors, among them an epic scale, an unabashed emotionality in combination with formal complexity, a willingness to explore the heights and depths of human experience, brilliant orchestration, an expressive palette ranging from delicate simplicity to overwhelming power – and a profoundly intuitive appropriation of symbolic associations and patterns.[496]

Almén's assertion that Mahler's music is best known and loved for its scale, complexity and power has been echoed so widely that it is taken for granted and dutifully noted, rather than explored critically. Within the context of the epic meta-category, however, Almén's presentation of Mahler and his music has great implications. Almén explicitly labels Mahler's 'scale' as the epic element of his music, which differs from what others have argued (Boulez has described an 'epic dimension', Seth Monahan suggests an epic 'type' or 'impulse', and Elizabeth Abbate refers to an epic 'quality').[497] Scale is a notable choice for not only typically being more quantifiable than other meta-categories (in terms of duration, number of performers), but also as a reflection of how popular sources introduce new listeners to Mahler as a composer of long and complicated symphonies.[498] Designating scale as the primary outlet for "epicness" suggests that the epic quality of Mahler's music is easily identifiable to any listener, whether or not they are musically trained or completely new to Mahler. The alleged epic scale of Mahler's works thus becomes part of a self-reinforcing cycle: epic scale

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[496] Byron Almén, "The Sacrificed Hero: Creative Mythopoesis in Mahler's *Wunderhorn* Symphonies", in ed. Byron Almén, *Approaches to Meaning in Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 135.

[497] Bryon Almén, "The Sacrificed Hero", p. 135. Seth Monahan, *Mahler's Symphonic Sonatas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 32+219. Elizabeth Teoli Abbate, *Myth, Symbol, and Meaning in Mahler's Early Symphonies*, doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1996, p. 88.

[498] Classic FM, for example, suggests that Mahler's music can only be really appreciated if the listener is willing to invest time and effort, implicitly invoking ideas of length and complexity (with more explicit references later in the article). 'Mahler: Where to Start', Classic FM, https://www.classicfm.com/composers/mahler/guides/mahler-where-start/, accessed 19/10/2018.

accounts for Mahler's popularity in the concert world, and this popularity encourages further exploration of why Mahler has been so elevated, although this has not led to explicit interrogation of the ways in which the epic and scale are related in Mahler's music.[499] However, Mahler's canonisation relies on the most superficial understanding of scale in music and assumes that epic follows its vernacular meaning of being particularly amazing or impressive. Almén's throwaway phrase, then, has weight, but there is more to the Second Symphony's engagement with epic than scale alone: Mahler engages with a wealth of epic archetypes, from the connections between hero and the divine, to the use of multiple time frames or layers. Many of these archetypes illustrate newer conceptions of the epic at the end of the nineteenth century: size and scale are crucial; the hero is increasingly ambiguous and more often a hero figure or persona; time and narrative are not necessarily linear or only manifest in a singular fashion; and multiple voices are expected. This version of epic reflects the transitionary style between Romanticism and modernism that Richard Taruskin terms "maximalism", defined by its 'radical intensification' of elements and means of achieving particular goals.[500] Taruskin describes Mahler as the 'quintessential representative' of "maximalism", setting up the expectation of the composer as tied to conceptions of the epic associated with that style.[501]

However, Mahler presents epic archetypes as highly ambiguous and often contradictory, and frequently critiques characterisations of epic (and other categories or genres that he references) as fixed and unvarying. Mahler's critique foreshadows a lot of scholarship on the epic written from the last quarter of the twentieth century,

[499] Lebrecht's introductory remarks in his book *Why Mahler?* are indicative of the lavish praise and "genius" rhetoric that often surrounds Mahler in criticism. Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler?*, p. 5-6.
[500] Richard Taruskin, *Music in the early twentieth century*, p. 42-43.
[501] Ibid, p. 44.

contributing to the relatively recent wider re-evaluation of Mahler as a transitional figure with 'subversive modernist' tendencies and interests.[502] Yet, themes of transcendence root the *Resurrection* in long-standing epic tropes, so that the symphony explores the meta-category as both a historical and contemporary phenomenon. The pre-existing and innovative aspects of the epic meta-category that Mahler combines are both reconcilable and at odds in the *Resurrection*.

As with the vast majority of musicological scholarship, Mahler's symphonies as a whole are rarely described as epics, with commentaries more inclined to describe specific musical elements as "epic", like Almén's 'epic scale' and Monahan's epic 'impulse'.[503] Both popular and scholarly discourse on Mahler label aspects as "epic" in discussions around the meta-category's most conventional themes, such as narrative and time. Seeing the *Resurrection* as echoing epic archetypes is by no means assumed across the board, nor is there a single presentation of these themes on which critics agree. In some cases, the varied opinions are based on differing definitions of the concepts involved. What the *Resurrection* literature has done is align the work with key elements of the epic meta-category (as well as elements of myth and fantasy) and suggest that Mahler's exploration of these archetypes was multi-faceted and occasionally contradictory. In Mahler's hands, the epic meta-category explored new boundaries in a self-critical manner, a characterisation that will be discussed here within three notable themes. Firstly, Mahler's use of topics in the *Resurrection* presents the possibility of an epic topic or topic group. Secondly, the *Resurrection*'s hero and community are depicted in a manner that is unusual for the epic. And finally,

[502] Peter Franklin, "Mahler, Gustav" *Grove Music Online*.
[503] Bryon Almén, "The Sacrificed Hero", p. 135. Seth Monahan, *Mahler's Symphonic Sonatas*, p. 219.

through ideas of fantasy, myth, and utopia, Mahler engages with epic's relationship with the sublime in an unusual temporal period for an epic, namely the "post-quest" space.[504] Through these three themes, Mahler's significance for the epic meta-category lies in demonstrating its inherent ambiguity.

The epic topic

Mahler's use of topics is both widespread and a subject of considerable critical engagement.[505] In the *Resurrection*, the arrangement and choice of particular topics encourages questions about the possibility of an epic topic, topic group, or whether topics can function in an epic manner. Kofi Agawu has argued that topics in music from the Romantic period and later are too numerous to list individually, so "epic" could feasibly be part of such an undefined list.[506] However, while recognising that topics may have limits when crossing historical or stylistic divides, it might be more accurate to claim that no single topic can convey the epic aesthetic, but rather a group is required. Such a group could include topics as diverse as the pastoral, march, fanfare, chorale, or fantasia, echoing the diversity of the epic's archetypes. However, the epic's own diversity problematises the idea of an "epic" topic group: in spite of some common themes, the epic is too multi-faceted to be able to be represented by a small group of pre-existing topics. Moreover, the topics that could conceivably function under the epic umbrella are equally applicable to other labels (including generic mood labels, like dangerous or calm, or themes within the epic, such as heroism or a quest),

[504] The "post-quest" space here should be understood to mean the time that follows the hero's completion of the quest and continues the hero's journey. In Joseph Campbell's model, this period is often presented as a homecoming or return to the hero's normality. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Novato: New World Library, 2008), p. 23+29.
[505] Kofi Agawu uses Mahler as a key example in discussing the complexities of applying topic theory to Romantic repertoires. Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 45-48.
[506] Ibid, p. 45-6.

both alone and in combination with other topics. Nevertheless, the idea of an "epic" topic group is an appealing way to depict the scope or range of an epic world. The combination of multiple topics and their simultaneous presentation or large-scale collaboration across a work can create a third set of meanings, which are independent or reasonably differentiated from those which the individual topics generate on their own. These third meanings can thus take on an epic function or strongly evoke an aspect of the epic meta-category that a single topic alone could not do to the same extent.

The idea of topics gaining more value by working together, however, does require further investigation. To the best of my knowledge, no scholar has attempted to theorise the possibility of topics working in combination even though topics rarely exist in isolation. An obvious example would be Beethoven's use of both birdcall and storm topics in his *Symphony No. 6* (as noted in *Grove*), which represent the natural world's varied and changeable character.[507] While pastoral and storm topics are relative opposites in both the moods or images they present and the musical methods they use for doing so, there seems to be an underlying assumption that topics are mutually exclusive, which is misleading when one compares descriptions or representations of topics. The fanfare and march topics (which Kofi Agawu has identified as distinct entities) provide a convenient example.[508] The semantic and musical content of the fanfare and march topics similarly echo militaristic themes and a sense of discipline, such as an emphasis on triadic pitches, regular metre, dotted

[507] Joseph Kerman, Alan Tyson, and Scott G. Burnham, "15. Middle-period works" in "Beethoven, Ludwig van", *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, available at http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2709/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040026?rskey=E2sohW&result=4#omo-9781561592630-e-0000040026-div1-0000040026.15, accessed 28/11/2018.
[508] Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discoure*, p. 47.

rhythms, and marching-speed tempo, but these shared attributes are by no means compulsory. The sharing of musical and representational features should not be ignored in the topical analysis and lends credibility to the idea that topics are unlikely to exist in isolation.

It is also possible to group topics under headings of the kind of images or moods that they present without implying that they have to be heard or work together to depict an image or mood. Heroism through topics is a useful example here. Heroes are often involved in warfare, so any related topics can be interpreted as heroic (such as fanfares or marches); but similarly, heroes often enter into romantic relationships, hence the proliferation of love themes and associated topical content in concert and film repertoires.[509] War and romantic topics are unlikely to be heard together, but they both shape the hero's character and narrative trajectory. There are so many archetypes within the epic meta-category that an epic topic group could constitute dozens of different topics.

The notion of an epic topic group is further complicated by the fact that the musical features of each topic could be interpreted independently of their default topical meaning. For example, the periodic phrasing of a pastoral or march topic melody has

[509] An example of a hero's love theme (with the heroine) in the film world is Michael Kamen's score to the 1991 film, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, which has a prominent love theme based on the end credits song, "(Everything I Do) I Do It for You" (sung by Bryan Adams). While most love themes (including this one) are arguably associated with both the hero and his lover, such romantic relationships are important to the trajectory of heroic characters, with the lover typically functioning as the hero's prize for their achievements. For more about the role of romantic relationships in the hero's narrative, see: Thomas Greene, "The Norms of Epic" *Comparative Literature*, vol. 13, no. 3 (1961), p. 197 (for romance as fantastic and magical within the epic). Janice Carole Simpson, *George Eliot and the Epic Tradition*, doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1989, p. 40 (for the epic and chivalric romance). Marsha Bryant, "Epic Encounters: The Modernist Long Poem Goes to the Movies" *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 37, no. 4, Running History Backwards: Poetry-Contemporary to Modernist (2014), p. 79 (for post-war epic films heavily featuring romance plots).

potential connotations of stability, contentment, or predictability that are not necessarily related to the topic that the phrase is referencing. These potential multiple layers of meaning could present a new possibility. An epic topic group could be defined as a selection of topics that reference epic concepts or images. These references are supported by additional musical features or parameters that evoke the same concepts or images without directly referencing the group's specific topics. Topics provide a framework for meaning rather than fixed perceptions. The presentation and context of a topic, including how much the topic is emphasised or contradicted, is what can provide a collection of topics with an epic function or quality. In a way, this version of an epic topic group is dependent on scale, since it depends on significant echoes of epic archetypes to function. Local reinforcements of epic ideas cannot pack the same punch, and so cannot be deemed an epic use of multiple topics.

The question remains whether an epic topic group is a useful concept for analysing Mahler's works, especially as the concept itself thus far lacks a solid grounding. In the *Resurrection*, the variety of topics used and their various approaches certainly seem to echo the importance of scope for both the epic meta-category and the epic topic group. But, the epic nature of an epic topic group should arguably be created by using the topics to shape an epic or an epic character. If the topics in the group echo archetypal themes, they take on the epic mantle. While topics are not the only musical features to engage with the epic meta-category, the distinction of being an epic topic group is also bound up with whether a work is deemed epic or not as a whole. Even though epic topics, themes or images can be present in works that are not deemed "epic", an epic topic group should be justified as contributing to the rationalization for the work's overall "epic" label. Epic topic groups and epic works depend on each other

for their own validation as part of the epic meta-category tradition. However, this co-dependency may not be essential. Each topic within the epic topic group will have a specific function, balance within the group, and each work will have its own non-topical concerns or materials and organisational methodology. This means that works that do not use topics or use them in an epic-based grouping are not excluded from being labelled as epics, but rather they have the potential for an epic nature or purpose. For instance, in the *Resurrection*, Mahler's topical repertoire is still present in sections of the symphony that resemble memories or dreams.[510] The use of epic topics in these alternative spatio-temporalities suggests that the "present" of the *Resurrection* may not depict an epic event, but rather the response to one, which is then referenced through memory or dreams. Distinctions between epic works and works referencing epics are not always explicit, and that ambiguity contributes to the foregrounding of epic topics or topic groups when considering the meta-category's manifestation in music.

Assuming that the topics in the *Resurrection* function as an "epic" group, the assumed interdependence of epic topic groups and epic works is one way in which Mahler both engages with and adapts Wagner's leitmotif technique, despite its often contradictory theory and practice. Topic groups share the same multiplicity as leitmotifs – several different ideas are used in the same work for different effects – and the same "signpost" quality, guiding the listener through the work. But Mahler's use of topics has some key differences to the leitmotif. Topics are not necessarily thematic: they could be harmonic devices or textural presentation without any explicit melodic

[510] Scholars that argue that the *Resurrection* contains periods of memory or dream include Ryan Kangas and Lóránt Pétéri. Ryan R. Kangas, "Mourning, Remembrance, and Mahler's "Resurrection"" *19th-Century Music*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2012), p. 70-75+81. Lóránt Pétéri, "Form, Meaning and Genre in the Scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony" *Studia Musicologica*, vol. 50, no. 3/4 (2009), p. 255.

material. Because of this, topics do not necessarily represent particular characters, images, or places, but tend to evoke moods instead. While these differences to leitmotifs are by no means uniform or without any ambiguity, topics seem to function in a different way to leitmotifs in Mahler's music: clarity is not the desired effect, with ambiguity preferred for engaging with the *Resurrection*'s overarching question of whether there is life after death. The clearest topic is arguably the evocation of the divine in the choral coda of the final movement, the first clear expression of the end of the mystery of death as the hero transcends and is resurrected. Topical ambiguity does not necessarily serve an epic purpose within the context of a topic group, but can do so by reflecting aspects of the epic meta-category with inherent ambiguity, such as the tension between fact and fiction. Mahler's engagement with the leitmotif tradition through his topical strategies demonstrates Wagner's influence in rethinking how works of great scope could express and structure their central ideas. Whether Mahler makes use of an epic topic group, or any similar theory regarding the epic use of topics, requires more debate and an in-depth study of all the topics used in the *Resurrection* and the other symphonies.

Two of the most prominent topics in the *Resurrection*, the horn call and the waltz, provide insight into how Mahler's use of topics blurs the real and the imagined. Characteristic of the epic meta-category, Mahler uses that ambiguity critically. Both the horn call and the waltz topics mimic "real" sounds, albeit tinged with the fantastic. This inherent tension detaches the topics from their historical contingency and provides them with much broader associative meanings. Horn calls become markers of displays of masculinity and power, while the waltz topic can have a sense of romance, spinning motion, or giddiness. Mahler subverts elements of each topic to demonstrate

the fragility of these broad associations, and how easily they can transform into something different. It is this precarious balance between the more familiar and the unfamiliar topical associations and meanings that arguably provides the epic function of topics in the *Resurrection*: Mahler imbues topics with the power to change meaning radically through irony or even paradox. Horn calls and the waltz topics present two of the clearest examples of this critical ambiguity and function.

Horn calls are one of the more historically contingent topics, but, owing to their long and illustrious history of famous musical depictions, they remain one of the most readily identifiable topics. While Mahler uses horn calls in various guises, arguably the most archetypal presentation of a horn call appears in bars 43-47 of the fifth movement. Off-stage horns present the call unaccompanied and with pauses interrupting the regular metre, so that the phrase feels outside of the symphonic world. The call's reliance on the tonic and dominant reflects the original limited pitches that could be played by the bugles that played these phrases in "everyday" contexts. While horn calls are no longer a fixture of the sonic environment, Mahler carefully presents this call to sound so natural that it is almost predictable, departing just briefly from the symphonic world. Thus, the horn call functions as an environmental sound, but its natural quality cultivates a moment of diegetic ambiguity. Being off-stage, the horns are spatially separated from the rest of the orchestra, so they occupy a space somewhere between the symphony's hero and the audience, existing wholly in neither world. This function references the horn call's traditional role as a form of communication, in this case between off-stage and on-stage spaces or between audience and symphonic characters. On the one hand, horn calls are an environmental sound from an imagined pre-industry rural idyll, which suggests that the horns are

spatio-temporally closer to the symphonic space than the audience. On the other, the horn calls act as a kind of "reset": the preceding material has died away, while what follows bears little resemblance to anything already heard in the movement, as if the horn calls force the music back to "reality" (albeit one in a fantastical space) after a tangent. After five bars of simply sustained notes, the horns feel like an outside voice breaking through the diegesis to snap the movement out of a brief reverie. Using horn calls as a marker of "reality" is ironic, because of their links to such an idealised, quasi-fantastical environment, so where the horns are situated remains ambiguous. Thus, the diegetic ambiguity of the horn call contributes to a topical function that stretches beyond the spatio-temporality of the symphonic world, fashioning a community of listeners that transforms the audience into participants.

Despite this ambiguity, the off-stage horn call acts as a timbral marker of vast scale, by suggesting that the musical space goes beyond simply that occupied by the on-stage orchestra. The preceding few bars shows the on-stage orchestra grind to a halt, left on low string open fifth and octave pedal notes and a gently rumbling bass drum before three beats of complete silence. It is as if the orchestra no longer knows where to go from the point that they have reached, and the off-stage horn call serves as a reminder of the vastness of the world still available to explore. The distance between the auditorium and the off-stage horns is traversable, as the horns are clearly audible, even when producing echoes, which suggests that the distance between the off- and on-stage worlds is similarly traversable. Mahler's use of off-stage material nevertheless separates the two worlds and creates the illusion of something otherworldly by

temporarily highlighting its distance from what we know (off-stage).[511] The third and fourth notes of the phrase are marked 'Echo', which suggests that other places and spaces on-stage and off-stage can hear the call – the world that this music sounds within is vast. Mahler plays with the idea of music simultaneously inhabiting several worlds in this movement, and leaves the audience guessing where the boundaries between worlds lie, and what constitutes reality and fiction.

Mahler's balance of fact and fiction also manifests itself in his use of the waltz topic, which Carolyn Abbate famously discusses in terms of constructing the metaphor of deafness, experiencing something while acknowledging its meaninglessness.[512] However, the waltz topic's perversity expands the complexity around what may or may not be fictitious. Until bar 212 of the second movement, there are plenty of typical waltz topic characteristics, including triple metre, consistent tempo, emphasis on the first beat, and a subtle dactylic accompaniment. But, this is no ordinary waltz: elements of the macabre, even the grotesque, cause the movement to teeter on the edge of being in control on both structural and local levels. Lóránt Pétéri notes that the movement's two 'A' sections represent two different paths (the escapist and the cataclysmic), both of which seem equally likely to conclude the movement, but both 'A' sections feature deviations or ambiguities around the waltz topic.[513] Perhaps the most obvious deviation from the traditional waltz is the movement's faster, Viennese waltz-style tempo, which often creates a disconcerting, disorientating, or reeling

[511] This effect could be exacerbated by performances in particularly prestigious venues: the mutual mythicised reputations of both venue and work elevate the otherworldly qualities of Mahler's music and encourage the feeling that the performance is a mythical experience.
[512] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 126.
[513] Lóránt Pétéri, *The Scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony: A Study of Genre,* doctoral dissertation, University of Bristol, 2008, p. 146.

effect, such as in the paired dynamic swells in bars 21-22 and 23-24. The frequent descending sequences in the melodic line create a similar feeling – for example, the first violins sequence in bars 16-19, with accents in bars 17 and 18 that emphasise the sequential pattern. As each sequential movement changes melodic direction, the line jolts uncomfortably. Even when the melodic line has fewer changes of direction, the speed prevents any sense of resolution – it is unable to stop and feels in danger of spinning out of control, mirroring the dancers. A feeling of discomfort is exaggerated by the macabre sounds of *col legno* strings, the eerie muted string, sudden loud bursts (for example, bars 147^3-148^2, which uncomfortably begin off-beat), and the frantic acciaccaturas in both melodic and accompanimental lines. Mahler distorts the waltz topic to the extent that it leaves the listener questioning whether it is really a waltz at all or something else masquerading as a waltz. Pétéri describes this phenomenon as 'what happens *beyond* [the…] imaginary formal space', the idea that breaking 'generic contract' engages the music with something beyond its self-imposed boundaries, which strongly suggests the epic meta-category's ambiguity.[514] The waltz topic operates on a level between reality and dream that is reminiscent of the epic meta-category.

It is Mahler's treatment of the seemingly ordinary and predictable that engages the *Resurrection* with discourse on the epic – the boundaries between the real and the imagined are dramatically blurred. As Pétéri notes, the waltz topic's relationships with other topics remain mysterious right to the movement's end.[515] The waltz topic thus functions as one avenue into the movement's complex world, but one that will not

[514] Ibid, p. 125.
[515] Ibid, p. 154.

lead to comprehension. Juxtaposing what Pétéri terms the 'idyllic-nostalgic' and the 'grotesque-diabolic' in the second movement are part of Mahler's large-scale blurring of the boundaries between reality and dream-like illusion to suggest that the latter cannot wholly obscure the former.[516] Within the wider symphonic context, the second movement critically problematises nostalgic evocations of the epic. The tension between the idyllic waltz and the grotesque scherzo-like material is one of the most explicit displays of the struggle that the symphony's hero undergoes in pursuit of transcendence. Describing the waltz topic as having an epic function is an oversimplification despite its large-scale significance. Neither the waltz topic nor the *Resurrection* reconcile the possibility of an epic topic or topic group with a more critical approach to the meta-category, but rather expose the complexity of the idea.

The hero and the community

The *Resurrection*'s ambiguities between reality and fantasy are further manifest in the figure of the hero, whose very existence in the symphony is a matter of debate. On the one hand, Mahler's programme talks of a hero, who ultimately achieves transcendence and is also present in the memories or imaginings of the community of mourners. On the other, the later withdrawal of that programme suggests that, at the very least, the hero mediates other aspects of the symphony rather than being the work's central subject. Most discussions of the *Resurrection*'s hero lie somewhere between these two poles. Jens Fischer argues that the hero is inactive and only really "exists" through the memories presented in the *Resurrection*.[517] In a similar fashion, Deryck Cooke describes the hero as a 'projection' rather than a real figure, which echoes the concept

[516] Ibid, p. 18.
[517] Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 204.

of the heroic persona.[518] Seeing the hero as metaphorical has distinct echoes of the heroic archetypes that the epic has inherited from myth and legend: heroes depend upon the written or spoken word to become legendary, embodied in stories of their deeds and successes rather than existing among us, as Jasper Griffin argues.[519] Both Katarina Stokes and James Buhler identify the hero's struggle as more important to the hero than any victory.[520] Beyond these few observations, the hero in the *Resurrection* attracts surprisingly little critical attention. Jens Fischer suggests that the hero cannot be named or located in the work.[521] The *Resurrection*'s hero lacks many of the conventional markers of a hero's presence, such as a heroic theme or leitmotif; in fact, the hero is only really identified by Mahler's (ultimately withdrawn) programme notes. As a metaphorical projection or memory, the hero's unlocatable nature creates distance between them and their community (and/or the listener), a distance that echoes the prevailing idea that the epic hero is superhuman (as Kees Bolle and Richard Buxton argue) and merely a persona than a fully-fledged hero.[522] Neither Mahler's programme notes nor scholarship on the symphony has named the hero, so the hero is best described as simply inhabiting a heroic persona without any of the necessary heroic achievements to support their claim. Assumptions about the presence of a hero in the *Resurrection* are based almost exclusively around Mahler's withdrawn programme note linking the work to the First Symphony, which details the hero's life

[518] Deryck Cooke, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 55. For epic literature's noting of the hero as a persona rather than a person, see: Dean A. Miller, *The epic hero* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).
[519] Jasper Griffin, "Greek epic" in ed. Catherine Bates, *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 16+22.
[520] James Buhler, ""Breakthrough" as Critique of Form: The Finale of Mahler's First Symphony", *19th-Century Music*, vol. 20, no. 2, Special Mahler Issue (1996), p. 126. Katarina Marković Stokes, *The World of Mahler's Early Symphonies: From Idea to Form*, doctoral dissertation, Brandeis University, 2004, p. 6.
[521] Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 151.
[522] Kees W. Bolle and Richard G. A. Buxton, "myth", *Britannica Academic*, accessed online https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4663/levels/collegiate/article/myth/108748, accessed 09/11/2018. R. P. Draper, "Introduction" in ed. R. P. Draper, *The Epic: Developments in Criticism* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1990), p. 14.

from 'youthful illusion' and 'heroic aspiration' to the concluding 'triumphal march', to use Peter Franklin's characterisations.[523] Arguably, however, the symphony is more concerned with ideas of transcendence and the sublime, so the absence of a "locatable" hero displays the more modern de-emphasis on the hero to explore much bigger and more complex themes than the hero. Mahler does not attempt to present the hero as a "real", identifiable figure, but rather one that facilitates exploration of other ideas and spaces.

Mahler's nameless hero goes against the example of the Wagnerian hero, partly reflecting the genre difference between symphony and music drama. In Wagner's *Ring* cycle, for example, Siegfried is not just the hero of these operas, but was part of Germanic and Norse myth for centuries, so he was a familiar Germanic cultural figure by Wagner's time.[524] Wagner's use of the Siegfried myth meant that the *Ring* cycle inherited a host of pre-existing associations, images, and heroic ideals, shaping both Wagner's writing and its later critical response. This intertextuality is at least in part invoked by using the same names as the various retellings of the myth, particularly 'Siegfried'. Wagner evidently attached considerable importance to both the character and his name to name the third opera in the cycle after the hero, offering a clear example of Draper's insistence on the naming of heroes. Conversely, the hero in Mahler's *Resurrection* has no such name, no obvious mythical lineage (since that would depend on a name), and no intertextual connections besides Mahler's First Symphony. No name is mentioned in the First Symphony or its programme either, which suggests two possible conclusions. The first is that the First Symphony is

[523] Peter Franklin, "Mahler, Gustav" *Grove Music Online*.
[524] For more on the character of Siegfried, see: Anon., "Siegfried", Britannica Academic, accessed online https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4663/levels/collegiate/article/Siegfried/67663, accessed 26/11/2018.

autobiographical and so the Second presents a vision of Mahler after his death, depicting Mahler as historicising and mythicising his own life and shaping himself as the heroic figure, with these symphonies as representations of both achievement and struggle.[525] The second possible conclusion is that the hero is not meant to be a specific individual, but rather represents the struggles that heroes in general undergo. Peter Franklin goes somewhat further by suggesting not only is the hero sidelined but is devalued. Franklin claims that Mahler saw the *Resurrection* as 'articulating ideas of democratic inclusiveness', making the hero figure a vehicle for a more widespread phenomenon rather than its focus.[526] In Franklin's eyes, the hero figure's only "heroic" function is to provide a source of inspiration as a figurehead for their community, fashioning a communal mythology in the manner of the epic without having an individually "epic" purpose. While the unidentifiable heroic figure cannot incite empathy or admiration in the same way that a specific, named hero can (and so their acts and presence consequently seem even less "epic"), the hero's importance within the epic is still perceptible.

The sidelining of the hero has encouraged greater critical attention around the hero's community (or communities), whose memories and experiences form a significant proportion of the material in Mahler's programme.[527] As Edward Reilly argues, Mahler

[525] The subtitle of the First Symphony (Titan) points to specific literary sources (the novels *Titan* and *Siebenkäs*, both by Jean Paul, and E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*) that provide a co-existing narrative for Mahler's self-mythicising. Notably, the autobiographical view of the First Symphony is not accepted or invoked by all critical and popular discourse. An example of a source that does advocate the autobiographical interpretation is: Deryck Cooke, "Gustav Mahler", Britannica Academic, accessed online https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4663/levels/collegiate/article/Gustav-Mahler/50133, accessed 26/11/2018. Peter Franklin, "Mahler, Gustav" *Grove Music Online*.

[526] Peter Franklin, "Mahler, Gustav" *Grove Music Online*.

[527] Some example programme notes that do not focus heavily on the hero include: Stephen Johnson, "Mahler 2", programme note for London Symphony Orchestra performance, 04/02/2018, available online at https://lso.co.uk/images/pdf/04-02-Web.pdf, accessed 23/11/2018; Michael Steinberg, "Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2 (*Resurrection*) Program Note by Michael Steinberg", programme note

addresses shared basic fears, like death, by focussing on the community rather than the heroic persona.[528] Epics typically deal with themes that with allegedly universal relevance or intrigue, so, according to Reilly, Mahler is operating well within the tradition. To evoke these universal themes, Elizabeth Abbate has pointed to Mahler's use of 'culturally resonant symbols' as a way of presenting and exploring shared beliefs.[529] Much as epics have been shaped around shared values (such as friendship, loyalty, and the prevalence of good), Elizabeth Abbate's remarks highlight Mahler's reliance on musical features that are widely interpreted in a particular way, thus connecting the community depicted narratively with the community fashioned from audiences. Reilly and Elizabeth Abbate's comments both suggest that Mahler encourages listeners to participate within his music as the community involved in the narrative.

Mahlerian criticism has been particularly vocal about how the composer's music can suggest a shared, communal listening experience as well as a community represented within the work.[530] The hero's community is thus both a fictional one, but also one created by the listeners themselves, witnessing the hero's transcendence and struggle. Listeners experience the symphony's wide emotional range alongside the fictional characters. However, the heightened communal aspect of this experience is created by the symphony both being an immense undertaking of listening and generating a sense

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for Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, date unspecified, available online at http://msomn.org/mahler-2-note-by-michael-steinberg/, accessed 23/11/2018.

[528] Edward R. Reilly, "*Todtenfeier* and the Second Symphony", in eds. Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson, *The Mahler Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 121. The role of the universal idea in the epic is discussed, for example, in: Kirsten Yri, "Inverting the Epic: The Music of Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven*" in ed. Stephen C. Meyer, *Music in Epic Film: Listening to Spectacle* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 612.

[529] Elizabeth Teoli Abbate, *Myth, Symbol, and Meaning in Mahler's Early Symphonies*, p. 75.

[530] Carolyn Abbate conceives of a communal 'mode', while Lóránt Pétéri suggests that the presence of community allows Mahler to engage with ideas of the Freudian uncanny, for example. Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, p. 149. Lóránt Pétéri, *The Scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony*, p. 20.

of achievement in the final movement's depiction of the hero's transcendence. By witnessing and justifying its occurrence, the community is partly responsible for the hero's transcendence, making it as much the community's achievement as the hero's. By invoking such a strong sense of community, the *Resurrection* reflects the epic's historical tendency to be a shared, communal experience and performance (a tendency still found in ethnographic studies of the oral epic).[531] This tendency reflects Mahler's high status in the performance sphere: his music's ability to manufacture communities through shared experience(s) is akin to creating fandoms in response to different media, notably film.[532] Listening to Mahler thus demands dedication and a willingness to undergo a journey from both the symphony's narrative characters and the audience. Shared experiences have been integral to descriptions of the *Resurrection*'s epic character, and the concept of community is evoked in ways beyond the symphony's broader generic associations with community.[533] The unity and accord of the community fluctuates through the symphony, but Mahler seems to suggest that they ultimately come together over the hero's transcendence in the final movement: they have a common figure to idolise, a common moral and behavioural model.

The opening and ending of the first movement offer contrasting depictions of community that represent a gradual uniting and mourning of the community behind the hero owing to the latter's death and burial. As the movement opens, several distinct lines of counterpoint emerge that, although separate, reflect the dominant

[531] A useful starting point for more detail on the various purposes of oral epics can be found at: Carole Pegg and James Porter, "Epics" *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, available at http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000052640?_start=1&pos=3&q=epic&search=quick#, accessed 27/11/2018.
[532] The fandoms of franchises like *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* have become so vast and complex that they have become the subjects of a number of scholarly and popular texts.
[533] For example: Lóránt Pétéri, *The Scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony*, p. 20.

funeral march and are given opportunity to shine. From the first bar, the cellos and basses set themselves up as the driving rhythmic force of the movement, based on important rhythmic motifs that reappear multiple times and are developed (for example, bar 2's semiquaver phrase) and important topic-driven rhythmic patterns, freely switching between duplet and triplet rhythms. The double-reed woodwind present the first melodic line (starting in bar 18), with fanfare-like phrases, joined later by the flutes. At bar 25, the upper strings abandon their accompanimental *tremolo* for a countermelody, while the brass and lower woodwind take over and develop the accompaniment line. Within the first thirty bars, the movement has four distinct voices that are not antagonistic at this point, but hint that they could be as the lines of counterpoint start to overlap more significantly rather than neatly dovetailing. Embodied by the orchestra as a reflection of nineteenth century orchestration approaches, the community appears to be united around the funeral march, but with the potential for ill feeling. The hero is inactive (the opening of the symphony being the hero's funeral march), so the listener must rely upon the community to understand what is taking place; the community is effectively narrating the funeral march. The community has an epic function by not being passive witnesses to events, instead providing its voice, even if, as seen in the first movement's opening, agreement cannot always be reached.

However, the final five bars of the first movement present a different impression of the community, a sense of cooperation or agreement. After a furious descending, triplet chromatic scale in the woodwind and strings, accompanied by the horns outlining a diminished chord, the tonic is reached, the dynamic drops and the texture thins to end the movement relatively peacefully. Once consensus has been achieved in

the form of tonic resolution, the movement is allowed to end. Both characterisations of the community in the first movement demonstrate its agency and integral role in shaping the events of the *Resurrection*. Mahler's depiction of the community in the first movement strongly reflects D. C. Feeney's idea that the hero facilitates narrative, but the subject of an epic is really the community around them.[534] However, following Wagner's theories, the community is unable to resolve the central conflict of the symphony, namely the struggle for transcendence: only the hero can achieve that, according to John Deathridge.[535] The first movement arguably depicts the process of the community's realisation that they require a hero figure as a spiritual guide. Unlike Wagner's heroes, who have to defeat other beings to achieve victory, Mahler's hero has to achieve transcendence to inhabit the heroic persona to serve their community.

By the end of the first movement, the community seems to be united behind the hero, but it is the chorale coda in the fifth movement that really solidifies their connection. It would be all too easy to equate the voices of the chorus with those of the hero's community, as the ensemble is now of gargantuan proportions. While Wagner saw grand scale as a way to outdo others (as claimed by *Grove*), adding the chorus in the latter stages of the *Resurrection* suggests grand scale is a way for Mahler to depict the enormity of the hero's achievement and the significance of his transcendence for the community.[536] Mahler rejects Wagner's use of grand scale as a superficial measure of

[534] D. C. Feeney, "Epic Hero and Epic Fable", *Comparative Literature*, no. 38, no. 2 (1986), p. 143.
[535] John Deathridge, *Wagner: Beyond Good and Evil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 53.
[536] The significance of the hero's transcendence relates back to mythical archetypes, whereby the hero's ultimate achievement for both themselves and their community occurs through their death. Barry Millington, John Deathridge, Carl Dahlhaus, and Robert Bailey, "Wagner, (Wilhelm) Richard", *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, accessed online at http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2709/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-6002278269?rskey=wGCgST&result=2, published 2001, accessed 03/10/2018.

great art, and instead uses it to reflect the community's awe at the hero's achievements. However, the temptation to see the chorus as representing the hero's community is challenged musically and textually. The textual perspective shifts throughout the coda between first person (the hero), second person (the community), and third person (God/divine beings). By expressing these three groups through the same instrument, a connection is forged between them, achieving mutual understanding and expressing themselves with the same voice. The homophonic, often rhythmically identical, choral texture further emphasises this sense of unity. Unlike Wagner's theorisation of the "ideal" community based around the nation, which Dieter Borchmeyer discusses, Mahler presents a kind of cosmic community that transcends barriers like nationality, united instead around the hero.[537] Admiring a single figure as a moral guide is the means for communal coherence and a unified identity, echoing the presentation of communities in particularly ancient epics.

The *Resurrection'*s choral coda presents a particular problem when assessing orchestral music's interaction with the epic meta-category, namely whether music can be "epic" without the use of voices. The considerable critical attention focused on final movement's choral coda as a source of the work's power does not mean that the coda has been singled out as the moment that makes the *Resurrection* epic, but rather that it embodies the most explicit evocation of the symphony's engagement with the epic meta-category.[538] The length of such a closing passage, the vastness of the sounding

[537] Dieter Borchmeyer, *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*, p. 59.
[538] This tendency is particular prominent in reviews of performances, whether by professional concert critics or members of the general public through forums like YouTube. Whether this pattern is because of the more "epic" qualities perceived in the coda or simply because it is the last thing audiences hear (and are therefore more likely to remember when reviewing the performance) is debatable, and has consequences for how musical "epicness" is discussed in relation to concepts like climax and end-weighted form.

ensemble, the extremely loud dynamic markings, the evocation of the divine, and the presence and use of voices all contribute to the coda earning particular critical attention. Textually, themes of transcendence, triumph through struggle, immortality, and closeness to the divine all appear. While the text references epic archetypes, the dramatic potential and orchestration possibilities offered by the voice are significant for echoing the epic meta-category aesthetic. The fact that Mahler reserved his use of the whole vocal ensemble for the end of the fifth movement suggests that they represent a colouristic change, expressing the transcendent world that the hero reaches (whether literally issuing from that world or representing those witnessing events related to it). Using voices may simply differentiate the "transcendent" word from the human, mortal one. The hero's transcendence does not automatically map an epic quality onto the use of voices, but rather the voices narrate a process of forming an epic.

The post-quest space, time, fantasy, and myth

Unlike most evocations of the hero's journey, the *Resurrection* covers the portion of the quest given the least artistic and critical attention, namely the time after the quest is completed, the homecoming and search for transcendence (if following Mahler's original programme note).[539] Mahler's focus on the post-quest space enables exploration of how a narrative is "epicised", which, in the *Resurrection*, is largely done through the hero's transcendence. The transcendence process is not straightforward, forming almost a separate quest, transforming the post-quest space into a narrative

[539] As Floris Koot argues, the "us versus them" thinking of the typical hero's journey does not reflect how problems are normally solved. Rarely is a solution found by simply removing a single "bad guy", which the *Resurrection* illustrates by the struggle continuing in the post-quest space. Floris Koot, "A New 'Hero's Journey'" Medium.com, published 01/05/2016, available at https://medium.com/the-gentle-revolution/a-new-heros-journey-cdd8ca77a7d3, accessed 14/02/2020. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, p. 23-32.

event of epic proportions. Mahler's highlighting of the post-quest space serves several purposes: it develops connections between the sublime, transcendence, and their elevation of particular parts of the epic and hero's journey; it provides an alternative view of epic scale or scope; and it further blurs distinctions between reality, fantasy, and how these layers play out temporally. In many ways, the post-quest space offered Mahler greater freedom for fashioning and combining narrative layers than the more conventionally emphasised parts of the hero's journey.

Literature on the *Resurrection* puts considerable emphasis on its depiction of narrative owing to Mahler's swift withdrawal of his original written programme. Most sources (both scholarly and amateur programme note material) agree on the programme's content, but there is little agreement around how this content is depicted, or whether such precise events are presented at all. Albert-George Schram claims that the *Resurrection* does not narrate, but instead depicts a series of 'emotional states' that provide a guide for listeners around the wider image and ideas of the work.[540] Schram's ideas evoke more modern epic tendencies by concentrating on a figure's internal thoughts and emotions rather than on external feats of physicality.[541] The notion of a series of states suggests an episodic structure of emotional tableaux; while episodic constructions have links to the epic, the idea of 'states' has implications of stasis that are less aligned with meta-category norms. By accepting Mahler's original programme for the *Resurrection*, the depiction of dreams, illusions, and memories has attracted attention in popular and critical discourses.[542] Lóránt Péteri suggests that

[540] Albert-George Schram, *Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 2 (C minor): A Historical Background and Analysis*, doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1985, p. 19.
[541] Ibid, p. 16.
[542] For instance, see: Stephen Johnson, "Mahler 2", p. 4-5. Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 54-70.

Mahler's formal deviations from classical archetypes are symptomatic of dream- and illusion-states, with formal boundaries as signposts for these spaces within the symphonic world.[543] Benjamin Davies offers an alternative view, suggesting that Mahler can blur the boundaries between reality and illusion through both spatial and fantastical means.[544] Péteri's and Davies's disparity over the clarity of boundaries (whether formal or metaphorical) echoes the way that the symphony creates confusion by the blurring of reality and fiction found in the epic. Ryan Kangas articulates this blurring more explicitly in his discussion of memory in the *Resurrection*, where memories are 'reconstructions' rather than exact replicas of the past, neither fact nor fiction.[545] Dream, illusion, and memory are all concepts that interact within the grey space that the epic can create between fact and fiction. The subtle differences of opinion expressed by Péteri, Davies, and Kangas demonstrate how that space is being acknowledged as an area that can explore complex philosophical issues that are prominent in epics.

The framing of the divine within the fantastic aesthetic is an important means of manifesting the tension between fact and fiction in the *Resurrection*. Many of these discussions rely on the rhetoric of escapism, a concept strongly criticised by Adorno (as discussed by John Shepherd) as an intellectually-deprived practice that serves a capitalist agenda, but more recent discourse has reconsidered this damning verdict.[546]

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[543] Pétéri, for example, sees the Scherzo movement as an 'escapist illusion', referencing the existence of space external to the symphony. Lóránt Pétéri, "Form, Meaning and Genre in the Scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony", p. 255.

[544] Benjamin K. Davies, "Fantasy, Denial, and Virtual Reality in Mahler's Fourth Symphony" in ed. Jeremy Barham, *Rethinking Mahler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 4-5.

[545] Ryan R. Kangas, "Mourning, Remembrance, and Mahler's "Resurrection"", p. 72.

[546] John Shepherd, "Sociology of music", *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, available at http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-

Discussions of escapism largely centre on the second movement of the *Resurrection*, with Carolyn Abbate and Lóránt Péteri offering differing interpretations of how the movement facilitates and characterises escape. Abbate argues that the symphonic protagonist observing (from a distance) the movement's events that the audience witnesses, but the protagonist's escape from centre stage does not provide comfort or 'solace'.[547] Instead, escape is the unfulfilled promise of fantasy that blurs the protagonist role. Conversely, Péteri argues that the scherzo movement is an 'escapist illusion' or dream that is manifest in the denial of the Schopenhauerian Will.[548] In Péteri's view, the movement presents an illusion that has the potential to facilitate escape, but offers two versions of how the illusion will play out in the form of two 'A' sections.[549] The former is 'escapist', the latter cataclysmic or disastrous.[550] Péteri does not specify how escape is achieved – in fact, he explicitly states that the abandonment of the everyday could be manifest in means as diverse as magic, initiation rites, or even death.[551] This ambiguity demonstrates that the fantasy enabled by escapism is by no means always a positive experience for the escapee. Similarly, the first movement's episodic structure means that returns to or reminiscences of the opening funeral march material function as constant reminders of death, denying escape over the long-term in spite of attempts to move away from that material. Mahler presents escapism, fantasy, or dreams as offering wish fulfilment but ultimately not providing the escapee what they seek. Abbate's and Péteri's discussions highlight how Mahler critiques the idea of fantasy as escapism, demonstrating instead how the act of escape is ultimately

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9781561592630-e-0000026085#omo-9781561592630-e-0000026085-div1-0000026085.8, accessed 25/11/2018.

[547] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, p. 148.

[548] Lóránt Pétéri, "Form, Meaning and Genre in the Scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony", p. 255. Lóránt Pétéri, *The Scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony*, p. 134.

[549] Lóránt Pétéri, *The Scherzo of Mahler's Second Symphony*, p. 146-7.

[550] Ibid.

[551] Ibid.

unhelpful to the escapee's struggles. The rhetoric of fantasy, then, frames this view of escape as part of a wider meditation on the place of fantasy in the modern world: Mahler's problematisation of escape suggests a move away from the Romantic wanderer and adventure-seeking tendencies, aligning with a more cynical, "critical" modernity.[552]

Mahler's status in the wider musicological world undeniably enhances the fantastical or mythical dimensions of the *Resurrection*. Particularly mythicised since his so-called "renaissance" in the 1960s, Mahler continues to attract descriptions that elevate him to god-like levels – Seth Monahan describes Mahler's "star" as 'still on the ascendant', for instance.[553] Norman Lebrecht links vast swathes of late twentieth and twenty-first century music to Mahler's ability to transcend seemingly impassable barriers of culture and ideology.[554] These kinds of statements are not unique to the *Resurrection* within Mahler's oeuvre, but the two have tended to encourage those connections because of the symphony's mythical, divine-inspired material. In depicting heroic transcendence, the *Resurrection* encourages the listener to interpret the work in mythical terms, providing audiences with a 'spiritual experience', according to Elizabeth Abbate, regardless of the listener's spatial or temporal circumstances.[555] An example of this encouragement is the *Eroica* reference at the end of the development of the first movement (bars 315-319). Even in Mahler's time, the *Eroica* had a mythical status (both independently and as a reflection of Beethoven's own elevated position in culture). Referencing the *Eroica* in the *Resurrection* thus connects the symphony's hero

[552] Benjamin Davies offers a useful discussion on the relationships between escape, fantasy, and modernity regarding Mahler's Fourth Symphony: Benjamin K. Davies, "Fantasy, Denial, and Virtual Reality in Mahler's Fourth Symphony", p. 4-11.
[553] Seth Monahan, *Mahler's Symphonic Sonatas*, p. 1.
[554] Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler?*, p. 5-6.
[555] Elizabeth Teoli Abbate, *Myth, Symbol, and Meaning in Mahler's Early Symphonies*, p. 101.

and their pursuit of transcendence with the tradition of the heroic symphony. The listener is, in a sense, told that they are witnessing history (or myth) repeating itself in the *Resurrection*'s hero. Discussions of Mahler's high status elevate the experiential aspect of his music, whether the music provides or depicts an experience. Seth Monahan, for example, describes Mahler's music as charting 'the intricate contours of human experience', presenting multi-layered storytelling on the scale of an epic.[556] Mahler is thus framed as having extraordinary insight into the divine world and the mortal world. Within that framing, the *Resurrection* offers a glimpse at these two worlds, how they are connected, and Mahler's alleged ability to perceive both of them. In a sense, the transcendence of the *Resurrection*'s hero mirrors Mahler's own claim to that elevated status.

The *Resurrection*'s reception literature evokes many aspects of the epic meta-category that suggest a relationship between Mahler's symphony and mythical or fantastical imagery. The relationship between fantasy and concert music is more complex, as the latter lacks the visual apparatus of opera to make such imagery explicit. While Mahler's original programme makes connections between particular symphonic events and the divine or sacred explicit, fantasy's complicated relationship with the (problematic) opposition between high and low art has meant that overt references to fantastical imagery are minimal.[557] The high-low tension is often manifest in the subversion of normative references to fantasy, exposing the genre's more disturbing or unsavoury aspects. Since the nineteenth century, the use of particular instrumental

[556] Seth Monahan, *Mahler's Symphonic Sonatas*, p. 61.

[557] Richard Mathews observes how fantasy's tension between high and low art is manifest in its use of 'timeless mythic patterns', assuming myth's elevated status, with the problem of coherence that fantasy must adhere to in order to be successful. Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, p. 1-3.

features or techniques, including glissandi, string *tremolo*, pizzicato, and trills, has become a common means to evoke a sense of magic or wonder.[558] Mahler uses these references to engage with their tradition as indicators of the magical and mythical, but sometimes subverts our expectation of that meaning to expose the dark side to fantasy, fairy tale, and myth that is often glossed over. This strategy allows Mahler to build on Wagner's idea that myth and epic could embody 'universal struggle' better than any other narrative device or category: the darker side of fantasy may relate to internal emotions rather than an external evil.[559] Mahler's focus on internal struggle reflects modernist interest in the inner psyche, but this operates on the scale of myth or epic, extending the Wagnerian ideal of these generic categories being universally relevant (or, for Dieter Borchmeyer, having 'circular temporality').[560] The hero's struggles may be in pursuit of the elite event of transcendence, but the act of struggle is not solely a heroic experience. As Elizabeth Abbate argues, Mahler encouraged audiences to listen in mythical terms by showing that so-called "modernist" interests had historically been relevant for long-standing narrative tropes, including the hero's pursuit of transcendence.[561]

An example of the more positive, magical side of fantasy appears in the final moments of the *Resurrection*'s second movement. Having tonally resolved onto A-flat major, the final fifteen bars are almost exclusively fixed on the tonic (with the exception of the

[558] Some other concert works that include such techniques are Engelbert Humperdinck's overture to *Hansel and Gretel*, Wagner's *Das Rheingold* (in the last act in particular, as the Gods enter Valhalla), and Tchaikovsky's incidental music to *The Nutcracker*. Film score examples of this style of scoring fantasy/fairy tale/myth are extensive, ranging from many of the scores to Disney's classic fairy tales (like *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*) to John Williams's scores to the first three *Harry Potter* films (2001-2004).

[559] Stewart Spencer, "The "Romantic operas" and the turn to myth" in ed. Thomas S. Grey, *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, p. 72.

[560] Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 22.

[561] Elizabeth Teoli Abbate, *Myth, Symbol, and Meaning in Mahler's Early Symphonies*, p. 101.

third bar from the end, a hardly irregular V^7), and this tonal stability is reflected by sustained triadic notes in the flutes, clarinets, bassoons, and first violins. Within this calmness, the harps have some spread chords (one of which is marked *glissando*) and the pizzicato strings echo the woodwind's brief recall of motifs from the movement's opening theme. Everything about these final bars suggests tranquillity, simplicity, and innocence: this moment has one of the quietest and most stripped-back orchestrations of both this movement and the *Resurrection* as a whole. The second movement is alleged to represent mourners' memories of the deceased hero (particularly their youth), so the final image of calmness represents a peaceful culmination of the grieving process and remembrances. However, this impression of tranquillity also echoes Ryan Kangas's idea of memories being 'reconstructions' rather than replicas of the past, open to idealisation and romanticisation.[562] While the middle of the movement combines the same calmness and some turmoil, the focus of the movement's final moments and the more positive mood seem to ignore previous anguish, as if unaffected by it. The combination of tonal resolution and "magical" or fantastical colours romanticises the hero's youth in the movement's stable and calm final moments. This is an instance when an epic quality is arguably evoked without resorting to the predictable strategies of loud, expansive, and quasi-melodramatic. Instead, the music engages with the epic meta-category in the subtle suggestion of there being magic (or perhaps fate) at play in the hero's life. As the listener perceives this through the mourners' memories, the suggestion of magic's involvement reflects the community's idolisation of the hero, regardless of whether magic played a role in their successes or not. Simply by virtue of being deemed a hero by the mourners (and consequently worth devoting an entire movement, if not symphony, to), the subject of

[562] Ryan R. Kangas, "Mourning, Remembrance, and Mahler's "Resurrection"", p. 72.

the memories depicted in the second movement strongly suggests an epic quality. The fact that these musings on fantasy and dreams take place in the second movement reflects how they are part of the wider struggle narrative of the symphony. Following Mahler's stipulation of a five-minute pause following the first movement, the second movement feels like a first attempt to mentally or psychologically move on from the funeral march of the first movement. Memory, dreams, and the blurring of historical fact and fiction are framed as part of the grieving and transcendence processes that the *Resurrection* represents.

However, the first 'scream' chord (as Katarina Stokes calls it) towards the end of the third movement (bars 465-468) offers a completely different version of the fantasy aesthetic.[563] Essentially a B-flat minor triad over a C pedal, the scream chord has a disruptive influence on the third (and later fifth) movement, a strikingly unusual harmony in Mahler's language that appears unprepared.[564] Within this chord, the string *tremolo* and harp glissando-like arpeggios enhance the terror of the scream, in contrast to the calm of other fantasy references. Much of this subversive quality stems from elements of Mahler's orchestration, including extremes of pitch, dynamic, and thick texture. The harp's grouping of eleven notes also clashes against the timpani's militaristic rhythm for a chaotic rhythmic undertone below the sustained *tremolo* and chords in the woodwind and brass. While the fantastical references at the end of the second movement contributed to a sense of stability, the references in the scream chord exaggerate its volatile nature.[565] Particularly for the use of *tremolo*, this equates

[563] Katarina Marković Stokes, *The World of Mahler's Early Symphonies*, p. 326.
[564] This is not the only time that Mahler uses this chord, however. It most notably appears in the opening of the Ninth Symphony finale.
[565] This is a clear example of how topical references are at the mercy of the context provided by other musical parameters. The fantastical references in the second and third movements provide such

to a literal violent shuddering of the entire string section, while the harp offers no reinforcement of a regular metre to stabilise the chord, and in fact deliberately attempts to prolong the sense of irregular metre by crossing over the only instruments with the ability to outline the pulse (the timpani). These fantastical references point toward their respective darker sides, demonstrating that the balance between fantasy's good and evil sides may tilt at any moment. Thus, the scream chords acknowledge that the epic meta-category does not merely engage with positive images of fantasy, but rather than the fantastical world of the symphony is much wider. The scream chords arguably embody what Annegret Fauser describes as Mahler's attempt to reconcile post-Wagnerian modernism and its techniques (like rupture and sonic expansion) with the demands of the post-Beethovenian symphony: Mahler contextualises modernist moments of rupture as simply new devices within the long-standing collections of traditions and tropes in fantasy and epic by referencing those categories.[566] Epic and fantasy are thus presented as a way of bridging Wagner's Romantic idiom with the modernist context in which Mahler was writing.

In a similar way to the often-idealised presentation of fantasy, magic, or myth, a utopian version of escapism appears in several places in the *Resurrection*. The appearance of a contrasting, lyrical theme from bar 48 of the first movement is a moment of light amongst a movement dominated by militaristic, martial ideas, suddenly breaking through the minor mode darkness in a luminous E major. This moment of light is achieved through the predominantly upward melodic trajectory, the relatively high scoring of the horns for their clearest sound colour, and (cellos and

different images or moods, which is achieved through the musical parameters that are not explicitly referencing the fantastic, such as the dynamic markings and the choice of harmony.

[566] Annegret Fauser, ""Wagnerism": responses to Wagner in music and the arts" in ed. Thomas S. Grey, *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, p. 227.

basses aside) the general lack of the bass register. An air of simplicity and tranquillity is created by the flute's serene inverted dominant pedal, the triadic horn harmonies, and the uncomplicated doubling of the melody in octaves in the violins. The escape from the militaristic opening material seems almost blissful. However, Mahler suggests that the listener's escape will not only be temporary, but total escape was never fully achieved in the first place. In this, the cellos and basses play a crucial role. As the lowest instruments heard when the lyrical theme interrupts, the cellos and basses rock around but never quite settle on the dominant (B), continuing the same accompanimental pattern that they had been playing before the sudden move to E major. These low strings serve as a reminder of the continued existence of the world from which the symphony is trying to escape, providing only brief and temporary relief from the cold, militaristic funeral march. Similarly, the emphasis on the dominant in the flutes and lower strings, combined with the lack of tonic grounding, also gives the impression that utopia was never within the listener's grasp. Yet, the violin melody continues to yearn for the promised utopia with multiple appoggiaturas, the first in bar 50. Utopia will never be reached. As the melody line continues, any indication of a new world gradually slips away, as the already unstable tonality moves away from E major quickly, the violas switch to a nervous *tremolo*, and the frequent dynamic swells exaggerate the unsteadiness. The image of utopia quickly collapses, returning the listener to the funeral march by bar 64, with a reprise of the opening semiquaver motif. Mahler's allusions to a utopia engage with several traditions of the epic, namely struggle and failure (to achieve victory or peace), and the possibility of escapism. Through exploring the failure to achieve utopia, Mahler develops Wagner's notable shift of view around struggle from the latter stages of the *Ring* cycle, adopting the 'Schopenhauerian acceptance of inevitable suffering' when chasing a goal worth

pursuing.[567] The brief glimpses of utopia in the lyrical theme serve as reminders for what the hero and the community are both striving for, while the theme's disappearance attests to the struggle that still needs to be undertaken to reach the desired destination. Both Wagner and Mahler expressed the realisation that failure is inevitable when searching for a utopia or an ideal, echoing the importance of struggle in the epic.

When the lyrical theme returns in the first movement, its presentation and utopian references vary. The theme returns in bar 117, this time in C major, and the theme's feeling of calm lasts much longer this time. Lacking the melodic appoggiaturas and resolving to a tonic chord in bar 121, the theme stabilises more securely than the previous rendition, grounded by a stronger bass line. While the melodic material changes, the feeling of stasis from pedal notes and slower tempo continues until around bar 147, when the lower strings begin a sharp, dotted rhythm accompanimental pattern. On this occasion, while the music still does not settle in utopia, the listener is offered a longer period of respite from the funeral march, providing the promise of greater stability in this utopia-like space. In contrast, the lyrical theme's return in bar 208 is even more unsettled than its first appearance, with a prolonged cello trill, more active harp line, woodwind counterpoint and a thinner accompaniment texture that deny the flute melody triadic support. This version of the lyrical theme arguably shows the most insecure presentation of utopia yet, suggesting that hope for such a place is almost wholly futile. It is this view of the promised utopia that ultimately prevails: despite further reappearances of the lyrical theme, the

[567] Barry Millington, "*Der Ring des Nibelungen*: conception and interpretation" in ed. Thomas S. Grey, *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, p. 80.

movement ultimately ends with a violent chromatic scale related to the funeral march material and character. Utopia is lost, the tragedy of the hero's death prevails; the darker side of epic, with its struggles and failures, dominates the end of the first movement. Viewing the lyrical theme's appearances as attempts to reach some kind of utopia creates an episodic structure, as other events or moods separate each attempt – other challenges must be undertaken and overcome before trying to reach utopia again. Mahler's episodic construction follows the late-Romantic (and Wagnerian) tendency to see the strategy as a more '"epic" approach' (as Hilda Meldrum Brown puts it) to presenting events: since epics are long with multiple phases, episodes can provide a sense of direction and demonstrate the difficulty of achieving the goal (utopia, transcendence) by having to pass through each episode.[568] Each version of the lyrical theme is different, with a different outcome as a result of the struggle towards utopia, and so an episodic structure highlights how each attempt on utopia is met with different resistance.

With each version of the lyrical theme, Mahler demonstrates a Wagnerian understanding of myth as concerned with 'what happened once and continues to happen again and again'.[569] Like epics and myths both using plots that have been used numerous times, the reappearances of the lyrical theme within an unpredictable episodic structure eventually fashion the theme into an archetype, building on the "lyrical" second theme tradition as well as the role of the theme in the *Resurrection*'s internal narrative.[570] By the end of the first movement, the listener may well not only

[568] Hilda Meldrum Brown, *The Quest for the Gesamtkunstwerk & Richard Wagner*, p. 42.
[569] Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, p. 217.
[570] For useful discussion on the "lyrical" second theme tradition, see: James Webster, "Sonata form", *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, available at http://ezproxy-

recognise the theme, but also recognise the significance of its reappearance as a lighter moment within the context of the dark funeral march. Being an episodic rather than linear movement, the lyrical theme's simultaneous promise and denial of utopia engages with and expands upon Wagner's cyclical view of myth.[571] As Joseph Campbell argues, mythological stories tend to follow a similar pattern, framed by the beginning and ending of the (often utopian) mythological world.[572] In other words, myths (including those that Wagner actively engaged with) promise and deny utopia. In essence, Mahler adopts mythological principles, partly inherited from Wagner, that provide the *Resurrection*'s first movement with the longevity and scale of epic, and employs them for epic purposes.

Mahler's emphasis on the complex reality-fantasy relationship is particularly highlighted by his treatment of time, which extends beyond the confines of the symphonic space. As Peter Revers argues, Mahler conceived of his first four symphonies as one 'tetralogy' of epic proportions.[573] Each movement of the *Resurrection* thus has multiple functions – within the single symphony, the *Titan-Resurrection* two symphony programme, and Revers' four-symphony tetralogy – that require the simultaneous presence of multiple, layered time-frames.[574] This complex temporal structuring means that it is often ambiguous as to which time frames are

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prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2709/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026197, accessed 28/11/2018.

[571] In the scholarly critical literature, the cyclical interpretation of the *Resurrection*'s first movement has come into favour after several unsuccessful attempts to fit the movement within a sonata structure, even with all manner of possible deviations. Examples of scholars who support the sonata interpretation include Deryck Cooke, Neville Cardus, and Edward R. Reilly. For more on Wagner's views on myth, see: Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, p. 219.

[572] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, p. 30.

[573] Peter Revers, "Song and song-symphony (I). *Des KnabenWunderhorn* and the Second, Third and Fourth Symphonies: music of heaven and earth" in ed. Jeremy Barham, *The Cambridge Companion to Mahler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 93.

[574] Ibid.

foregrounded or "active" during the individual listening experience. Temporal ambiguity reflects Benedict Taylor's idea of musical time invoking depth to break out of the traditional linear model, creating a sense of each movement of the *Resurrection* being part of something bigger.[575] For example, the *Resurrection* establishes links to both its own musical material and that of the wider musical world, whether these are meant to have intertextual significance or not. For the former, the beginning of the *Resurrection*'s fifth movement references material from the end of the third movement, while the end of the development in the first movement arguably references Beethoven's *Eroica* (bars 315-319). In the sense of seeming to be part of something bigger, the symphony's time extends beyond the confines of the four movements, a form of timelessness that suggests not existing in linear time. As David Greene puts it, Mahler's music can make future and past seemingly disappear, which expands the audience's conception of continuity.[576] The sense of timelessness in the *Resurrection* removes a feeling of development from other fantasy markers to indicate that the symphony's events do not take place in a commonplace, everyday temporal or spatial realm.

However, Mahler's presentation of time has complexities beyond simply the impression of timelessness, according to David Greene.[577] Seth Monahan, however, explicitly labels Mahler's manipulation of time as '"epic" temporality', which he defines (at least in part) as the use of cyclical structures that realise long-range

[575] Benedict Taylor, *The Melody of Time: Music and Temporality in the Romantic Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 22+34.
[576] David B. Greene, *Mahler: Consciousness and Temporality* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers Inc., 1984), p. 2+14.
[577] David B. Greene, *Mahler: Consciousness and Temporality*, p. 1-2.

transformations of small ideas.[578] Monahan sees this particular version of temporality as a result of the interaction between narrative and temporal levels.[579] Similarly, Peter Revers' tetralogy idea frames time within the *Resurrection* and other early symphonies as compositional process of 'epic proportions' akin to Wagner's *Ring*.[580] Not only does Revers suggest that Mahler's notions of long-term time extended between compositions, but the comparison to Wagner also evokes the same mythological basis, uses, and views of time for both cycles.[581] Comparing Mahler's symphonies to Wagner's *Ring* mythologises the former in the latter's image: this additional mythic dimension of Mahler's works contributes to the composer's esteem as well as our understanding of his music. Monahan's emphasis on the interaction of narrative and temporal levels thus extends beyond the confines of the *Resurrection* to other works, including but not limited to Mahler's First Symphony and the *Eroica* references discussed above. Connecting with existing mythicisation processes is not an indicator of timelessness, but rather a way of suggesting that the *Resurrection* is part of this tradition. The connections between the *Resurrection* and other mythicised works function on both a large and small scale. While the programme and large-scale narrative trajectory of transcendence fashions links to the First Symphony, smaller-scale examples include local topical or generic references that invoke associations of high quality or elite status. For instance, the fourth movement's aria-like style links it to the elite genre of opera. The *Resurrection*'s narrative and temporality is thus multi-layered, constructing a web of intertextual and inter-generic references that simultaneously suggest the symphony's elite status and make it narratively and temporally complex.

[578] Seth Monahan, *Mahler's Symphonic Sonatas*, p. 206.
[579] Ibid, p. 61.
[580] Peter Revers, "Song and song-symphony (I)", p. 93.
[581] Ibid.

Regarding smaller scale temporal treatment, Stephen Hefling focuses on Mahler's use of cyclical constructions. In contrast to Monahan's idea that cyclical structures create '"epic" temporality', Hefling views cyclical repetitions in the *Resurrection* as units that 'lead nowhere'; for Hefling, in fact, there is nothing epic about Mahler's cyclical strategies.[582] Hefling's reading instead supports Thomas Bauman's argument that form articulates 'the passage of time itself', or the duration of a work.[583] The formal articulation of passing time suggests that the *Resurrection* plays out in "real time" (in other words, events playing out as they happen, narration of the present in the present), which is highly unusual for an epic.[584] Together then, Hefling and Bauman suggest that the *Resurrection* does not evoke the characteristics of an epic, and instead fills out its long duration with formal units that typically lack "epic" purpose. Hefling's and Bauman's argument demonstrates that cyclical forms by no means automatically indicate engagement with the epic meta-category, but rather that '"epic" temporality' (after Monahan) depends on other cooperating concepts or parameters. Time cannot "be" epic by itself, but it can have an epic function in the ways in which it manipulates how the music plays out with reference to epic meta-category archetypes, which can include the curtailing or elongating of how time seems to pass.

The narrative layers of the *Resurrection* function as one of the most notable large-scale means for Mahler to engage with epic meta-category norms. In her work on narrativity, Vera Micznik (after Anthony Newcomb) argues that the specific narrative

[582] Stephen E. Hefling, "Mahler's "Todtenfeier" and the Problem of Program Music", *19th-Century Music*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1988), p. 42.
[583] Thomas Bauman, "Mahler in a New Key: Genre and the "Resurrection" Finale", *The Journal of Musicology*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2006), p. 477.
[584] For more on the varieties of time in an epic, including that of "real time", see opening chapter.

quality of Mahler's music is generated through the combination of narrative activity and pre-existing plot archetypes.[585] Not exclusively found in the epic meta-category, archetypal plots also play a crucial role in myth. As Dieter Borchmeyer argues, Wagner theorised myth as repeating circular patterns that occur in cultural form throughout history, using essentially the same tale with a few subtle differences.[586] Famously, Wagner used myths from several cultures (including Icelandic, Germanic, and Nordic) as the inspiration for his *Ring* cycle (as noted by Barry Millington), an explicit example of using a pre-existing plot archetype.[587] Mahler's *Resurrection* also borrows from archetypal narratives (the hero achieving transcendence, the struggle to achieve victory) that are part of the epic tradition, but, as Micznik notes, it is Mahler's manipulation of these archetypes with the context-specific 'narrative activity' that gives the *Resurrection* its own particular narrative style.[588] This view suggests that Mahler's narrative strategies are closely aligned with epics in the mutual cooperation between archetypal plots and context-specific content. What Micznik (and others) do not detail is the specific roles and identities of the narrative layers in the *Resurrection*. Depending on one's reading of the symphony, these layers could involve functions as diverse as the formation of myth, narratives related to the hero and to the community, and memory or dreams. However, the identification and labelling of these layers somewhat misses the wider point and purpose of Mahler's multi-layered approach. The deliberate lack of distinction between the narrative layers makes it (ironically) clear that the hero's journey is never the only narrative that plays out in an epic, but

[585] Vera Micznik, "Music and Narrative Revisited: Degrees of Narrativity in Beethoven and Mahler", *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 126, no. 2 (2001), p. 195.
[586] Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, p. 217.
[587] Barry Millington, "Ring des Nibelungen, Der ('The Nibelung's Ring')" *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, available online at http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000006214, accessed 26/11/2018.
[588] Vera Micznik, "Music and Narrative Revisited" ibid, p. 195.

rather one of many that occur simultaneously.[589] Historically, the hero's journey has been highly valued because of the hero's ability and tendency to have a greater impact on the narratives of others than more "ordinary" figures. However, by changing the emphasis and value put on the hero's journey in the *Resurrection*, Mahler demonstrates that epics engage with other narratives and subjects beyond the hero alone. In the case of the *Resurrection*, highlighting the community is of considerable importance for the symphony's wider exploration of transcendence. The community are not mere witnesses: they undergo their own narrative of grief, memory, and acceptance. The symphony's multiple narrative layers also mean that any localised blurring of reality and fantasy is subject to a "secondary blurring" owing to the indistinct nature of said narrative layers. As an example, the fourth movement is arguably one of the most prominent moments for the hero's voice and narrative layer. Textually, the solo alto describes wanting to be with God in heaven, which feels like a dramatic monologue or operatic aria in both subject matter and scoring. Dramatic or operatic references function as an elevating mechanism to demonstrate the hero's high status and offer a privileged (but brief) insight into their internal world. The fourth movement feels very different from the rest of the symphony, particularly in tone and length, which encourages the idea that this movement operates on a separate narrative layer. The epic nature of the *Resurrection*'s multiple narrative layers, then, lies in not just their frequent ambiguity, but also their references to categories beyond the symphonic world.

[589] These narratives do not necessarily occur contemporaneously, however. For many epics (or works that engage with the meta-category to some degree), the narrative of the audience's experience of the work is as important as the narratives that take place internally.

Conclusion

Long over-shadowed by discussions of vast scale, Mahler's music engages with the epic to provide a deeply complex and often contradictory impression of the meta-category at a significant point in its history. The *Resurrection*'s blend of long-standing epic tropes and newer modernist ideas supports Mahler's revised scholarly characterisation as a transition figure, reflecting his engagement with modernist thought and reimaging of how to combine those new ideals with pre-existing traditions. Arguably, the extent of Mahler's complex framing of epic archetypes as simultaneously or seemingly counter-intuitively modern and traditional that the *Resurrection* forces the listener to reconsider whether those allegedly "modern" engagements with the epic meta-category are new at all. Nevertheless, there are attributes of the *Resurrection* that are highly conventional: the presence of the hero and their struggle, vast scale and scope, a non-linear, multi-layered conception of time, and the connection between the sublime and the divine. Mahler's engagement with epic revolves around a tension between old and new, albeit one that operates above the level of a simply binary.

The *Resurrection* may not be Mahler's longest, most famous, widely performed, or critically acclaimed symphony, but that fact is where its significance for understanding the epic meta-category lies. Without being able to rely on these conventional markers of achievement (as the biggest and "best"), the *Resurrection* demonstrates that interactions with the epic meta-category function on a range of levels, including thematic content. The fact that the *Resurrection* manages to articulate its connections with the meta-category without also relying on its withdrawn programme note also points to the importance of ambiguity as integral to epic. Mahler shows not just that scale and monumentalisation are only superficial markers of the epic meta-category,

but also that they are essentially meaningless when lacking reinforcement through thematic tensions, dualities, and ambiguities. In the *Resurrection*, its epic qualities and references are depicted as so *because* their ambiguity leaves the question of their epic identities open to the individual. This plays into the meta-category's tension between being elite (in terms of narrative figures and creators) and democratic (created for a people, sharing of the narrative as part of the process of forming the epic). Despite using archetypes that have retrospectively been framed by literature on the epic as "modernist", Mahler clearly demonstrates the long history between ambiguity around the epic meta-category and works that could claim engagement with it.

Chapter Five: Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*: A Commentary on a Re-Telling

Introduction

As a concert work inspired by a film score and real-life event, Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica* is an anomaly among the composer's symphonic oeuvre. Following the release of *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948) (henceforth *Scott*), Vaughan Williams reworked his film score into a five-movement symphony, which premiered in 1953. Both film and symphony follow the story of Captain Robert Scott's 1912 expedition to be the first in the world to reach the South Pole. As Michael Beckerman observes, the story is well-known: the crew suffered great hardship and terrible conditions only to be beaten to their goal by their Norwegian rivals, and many ultimately perished, some only a few miles from their base camp.[590] Scott's diary survived as testament to their efforts. A "real-life" epic with roots in imperialist Britain and the power struggle that polar exploration represented, the tale of Scott and his crew, as Daniel Grimley claims, has become part of the British cultural imagination and collective memory.[591] *Sinfonia Antartica* has a complicated background that Vaughan Williams not only acknowledges but explores and uses to reframe the tale in a post-Second World War context. While the symphony has not been widely described as (an) epic, the film has been labelled in such terms, or at least as a version of an existing epic tale.[592] And, as Daniel Grimley notes, *Scott* 'became a means of reading the symphony programmatically', which has encouraged the misleading assumption that *Sinfonia Antartica* is merely an

[590] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker: Reading Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*", *Current Musicology*, vol. 69 (2000), p. 49.
[591] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear": The Landscapes of Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*" *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 91, no. 1/2, British Modernism (2008), p. 116. Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 42.
[592] James Day is one of the few commentators to mention that the debate around *Sinfonia Antartica*'s designation as an 'epic or heroic work' is ongoing and far from conclusive. James Day, *Vaughan Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 213. David B. Knight, *Landscapes in Music* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006), p. 138.

arrangement of the film score rather than presenting the expedition in a new light.[593] *Sinfonia Antartica*'s interest for this thesis is not so much whether it *is* an epic, but what it says about previous perceptions of both *Scott* and the "real-life" tale paratexts as epics.

So far, the critical literature on *Sinfonia Antartica* has been limited compared to Vaughan Williams's other symphonies. *Scott* is one of the more prominent film scores discussed in the Vaughan Williams literature, but this has not translated into interest in *Sinfonia Antartica*. In those texts that do consider *Sinfonia Antartica*, *Scott* typically provides the means for comparison and appraisal. For instance, Julian Horton suggests that Vaughan Williams's last four symphonies are all musically indebted to his film career, which reflects the idea that non-filmic epics can demonstrate a "cinematic" character.[594] Viewing *Sinfonia Antartica* as 'cinematic' reflects both criticism based on its connections to *Scott*, and film music's increasing presence in our interpretations of concert music. Based on popular sources, listeners are similarly inclined to interpret *Sinfonia Antartica* in terms of *Scott*, or at least in terms of film scores.[595] Both academic and popular discourses on the symphony assume that *Sinfonia Antartica* replicates the film's plot and ideology: the film score justifies the "greatness" of *Sinfonia Antartica*, an unusual inversion of the traditional assumption that symphonies

[593] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 125.
[594] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies" in ed. Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson, *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 200. Jeongwon Joe, "Introduction: Why Wagner and Cinema? Tolkien was wrong" in eds. Jeongwon Joe and Sandler L. Gilman, *Wagner & Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 2-3.
[595] See the comments on the following YouTube videos: 'Vaughan Williams: Sinfonia Antartica [Haitnik] Shelia Armstrong', posted by Muzikazaile, published 03/02/2016, 54,718 views (as of 4th January 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv6YBg7PLag, accessed 4th January 2018. 'Sinfonia Antartica: Vaughan Williams', posted by mutinyonthekitkat, published 08/11/2010, 37,413 views (as of 4th January 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLeOl0yj0-A, accessed 4th January 2018.

are aesthetically superior to film music.[596] In a way, this critical trend frames the symphony as a response to the film score rather than the "original" epic, which suggests an important link between epic and nostalgia.

However, the original Scott story occupies a precarious position within the epic meta-category, primarily as a result of the problematic mediation between individual biography and heroic archetypes. While there is a hero and a quest, many aspects highlight the shift in perspective as to what constitutes an epic. Scott may have achieved fame following his death, following the tradition of ancient heroes (as identified by Helen Lovatt), but his quest ultimately ends in failure for both him and his community (his crew and nation).[597] The hero's journey is present in some form, but the return journey is never completed.[598] Scott's expedition is relatively recent history, a "real-life" event, and does not have the longevity of a typical epic quest. Like other more recent epics, as noted by M. Gregory Kendrick, Scott's quest is one for personal (or rather a display of asserting national) excellence rather than defeating an evil, but the Antarctic functions as the antagonist.[599] While the film adaptation of the expedition has a few historical inaccuracies, it largely stays faithful to the "real-life" events.[600] What *Scott* represents is a tangible manifestation of the elevation that the original expedition "legend" has undergone in the following years. Produced shortly after the end of the Second World War, *Scott's* presentation of polar exploration

[596] An example of the traditional view can be found in: Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, p. 82.
[597] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze: Vision, Gender and Narrative in Ancient Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 348.
[598] For more on the hero's journey, see: Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces, third edition* (Novato: New World Library, 2008).
[599] M. Gregory Kendrick, *The Heroic Ideal: Western Archetypes from the Greeks to the Present* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2010), p. 6.
[600] The credits for *Scott* acknowledge the contribution of survivors and relatives to research for the film and its claims for authenticity. "Scott of the Antarctic (1948)" IMDB, available at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0040761/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0, accessed 03/11/2020.

explores nostalgia around the height of British imperialist power, which is ironic for a tale that ends in disaster. Polar exploration was one means of expressing a dominant power – its ability to conquer and do things for the first time that were previously deemed impossible or immensely difficult – and its elevation in *Scott* relies upon the ancient epic trope of the hero's glorious death having achieved something great. Although not the first, Scott and his crew did make it to the South Pole (their achievement), so their deaths could be framed within the ancient epic hero tradition. However, within a tale that reflects more modern aspects of the epic meta-category, insisting on an ancient epic hero seems misplaced and inappropriate.

It is this conflict between the expedition's modern aspects and its previous framing within the ancient epic ideal that Vaughan Williams uses for his commentary in *Sinfonia Antartica*. By meditating upon an already ambiguous epic, *Sinfonia Antartica* is not a retelling or adaptation of the Scott tale or film, despite the fact that the musical material derives from the latter. The symphony does not narrate the events of the hero's journey: it is more of a character portrait, showing an opposition between nature and humanity. Antarctica functions as setting and sublime "object" to show that nature cannot be conquered by humans, despite their best efforts. Vaughan Williams situates this character portrait within a highly complex temporality based around ideas of timelessness and a lack of teleology, while simultaneously acknowledging the symphony's complicated "cultural epistemology". Finally, the changing conception of epics is also expressed through a contrast between the fantastical and the realistic, predominantly used to characterise Antarctica. On the one hand, Antarctica is a fascinating fantasy world of sparkling ice and amazing wildlife; on the other, it is a 'bleak land' with hazardous weather conditions that provides a real

threat to humans.[601] This chapter will discuss how *Sinfonia Antartica* navigates a complicated mid-twentieth-century world torn between nostalgia for the past and ideological progress. Vaughan Williams's de-emphasis of the hero, balance between fantasy and reality, and non-teleological approach form the basis of this commentary.

The modern epic and the de-emphasised hero

Sinfonia Antartica may have been based on the score for *Scott of the Antarctic*, but it is notably not named after the eponymous "hero". A simple gesture, Vaughan Williams's choice of name exemplifies how this symphony addresses the epic concept of the hero. Like many other modern figures, Scott's designation as a hero is 'ambiguous'.[602] Within the tripartite framework of the epic hero (as outlined in the opening chapter), Scott is ambiguously situated. He certainly undergoes a quest and has a connection of sorts to a community (both his crew and his nation), but he seems to lack an obvious extraordinary quality. Personality traits like perseverance, prior experience of polar exploration, or even his leadership may be possible qualities.[603] While some commentators, including Michael Beckerman, have justified labelling Scott as a hero through the tradition of epic struggle, the fact that Scott failed and those heroic ambitions cost the lives of his crew provides a significant counter-argument.[604] Instead, Scott's acceptance of his defeat, and ultimately his demise, is his extraordinary quality, even if this heroic trait is not prominent until the latter stages of the quest and should not have been necessary at all. As his wife Ursula recalls, Vaughan Williams himself deplored the avoidable reasons for the expedition's failure, viewing the mission as a

[601] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 279.
[602] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 42.
[603] James Day paints Scott as a Promethean figure, 'who challenges and defies whatever arbitrary powers control human destiny'. James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, p. 212.
[604] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 48.

tragedy.[605] Scott, then, is best understood as a hero figure who aspires to be a hero of national importance (as Beckerman notes), but ultimately never fully inhabits that role.[606] Not merely a 'massively flawed and complex' hero, the hero figure label applies to Scott not just when the expedition took place, but in the following decades.[607]

Within the wider symphonic tradition, *Sinfonia Antartica* does not have a heroic main theme that functions in line with the conventions of the nineteenth-century heroic theme tradition. Vaughan Williams did label the theme that opens the first movement as the 'Heroism' theme, but as Grimley observes, it appears only in the outer movements.[608] This theme, however, represents the wider ideal of heroism rather than Scott specifically, according to Daniel Grimley, which encourages a view of the outer movements' use of the theme representing a somewhat idealised image of polar exploration.[609] As an expression of personal excellence and Romantic nationalism, Beckerman argues that polar exploration represented an arena for demonstrating heroism in a Romantic sense of conquering one's fears and overcoming self-doubt.[610] The 'Heroism' theme does not present this idea through particularly conventional means (such as ascending fifths, horn calls, or bright colours), being instead based around slow-moving ascending scalar phrases with modal inflections (see Figure 9).[611]

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[605] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 287.
[606] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 48.
[607] Ibid, p. 58.
[608] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 120+126.
[609] Ibid, p. 120.
[610] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 50. Max Jones, "Captain Scott and the 'Heroic Age' of Antarctic Exploration" in Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Sinfonia Antartica* (score) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. vii-ix.
[611] Daniel Grimley suggests that Vaughan Williams structures his harmony through particular interval classes, including octatonic scales, rather than functional processes. However, I am using the term 'modal' here because other varieties of scale are present in the symphony, so using 'octatonic' would be too restrictive. Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 129. Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 71.



Figure 9: 'Heroism' theme (first movement, bars 1-7)

A highly unusual "heroic" theme, certain aspects recall archetypal musical depictions of heroes (especially in its orchestration, often heavily involving brass), but these are overshadowed by its darker and more unstable attributes. The cautiously rising line may ascend, evoking a sense of never-ending struggle and determination to push through it, rather than the optimism or daring of the ancient hero archetype. Texturally, the melodic line is typically foregrounded, yet it is frequently subject to sudden changes of dynamic and stormy swells. The melody seems uneasy, even fearful, especially with its unstable harmonic foundation and modal inflections. As James Day argues, the 'Heroism' theme features such an array of triads (both vertically and horizontally) that a designated "home" key is almost impossible to recognise.[612] On a micro level, the 'Heroism' theme seems reluctant to inhabit the character of its label. However, the heroic aspect of the theme is more easily understood by examining its structural uses and repetitions. In the first movement, the theme generates all of the melodic material for the opening 56 bars, which returns elsewhere in the movement. A slightly truncated version of those 56 bars also reappears in the fifth movement (bars 130-172, followed by other material reprised from the first movement), creating a cyclical effect, as Grimley notes, seemingly unaffected by any of

[612] James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, p. 214.

the material in between.[613] This cyclical structure demonstrates the breadth and enduring power of heroism, acknowledging that Scott has been framed within this tradition regardless of his failures. As Alain Frogley suggests, the heroism depicted by this theme is not a brash, self-aware, loud variety, but rather one that continues to struggle on, idealising perseverance rather than boldness and daring.[614] Hugh Ottaway argues that the theme embodies the constant struggle of the expedition, as melodic and harmonic content seemingly independently move between stability and instability (dissonance).[615] Since much of *Sinfonia Antartica*'s material puts considerable emphasis on colour, the 'Heroism' theme represents an easily recognisable melody and subsequently functions as a "home", much like a symphony's tonic key might. Nevertheless, the theme's more insecure and unstable qualities curb that idealisation and remind the listener that Scott is merely a hero figure because of his ultimate failure. The 'Heroism' theme both encourages and discourages framing Scott within the hero concept, a means to display Vaughan Williams's conflicting ideas about both the man and the tradition, as Beckerman observes.[616] This ambiguity around the hero in *Sinfonia Antartica* does not lend itself to the heightened epic hero, instead characterising Scott as an ambiguous heroic figure.

At the end of the first movement, the 'Heroism' theme returns in a different fashion. This is the only movement that concludes in a loud, triumphant fashion, a rare moment of heroism being sustained. Arguably, this is only possible because the representation of the Antarctic is predominantly manifest in the inner movements

[613] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 126.
[614] Alain Frogley, "The symphony in Britain: guardianship and renewal" in ed. Julian Horton, *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 388.
[615] Hugh Ottaway, *Vaughan Williams Symphonies* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980), p. 47.
[616] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 49+60.

(with the exception of the vocal material first introduced in bars 68-93 of the first movement), so the dominating power of nature has yet to be fully articulated. Nevertheless, the strength of the first movement's concluding twenty bars or so (particularly from bar 184), with its full texture, *forte* or *fortissimo* dynamics, and grand *largamente* tempo, is notable how it contrasts with the opening of the movement. The opening and closing material are both at the same tempo marking (80bpm) and are both based on the 'Heroism' theme material, but are otherwise very different. Instead of cautiously creeping in like the opening, the concluding twenty bars are bold and declamatory, presenting the melodic content in an imitative fashion (see Figure 10) and varying the pitch content to be more diatonic than the theme was in previous versions.



Figure 10: First movement, bars 184-188[1] ('Heroism' theme material only)

Particularly in the imitative second entry from the lower woodwind and strings, the 'Heroism' melody is varied both melodically and rhythmically. Each ascent and descent occurs in only two bars or so, but begins on the second beat of the bar, which, combined with the imitative presentation, creates a sense that each phrase is truncated and gaining momentum. With accompaniment of piano and harp *glissandi* and trilling upper woodwind, the opening of this coda-like section has a busy accompaniment to the grand theme, painting heroism as simultaneously grand and active, an image related to the ancient heroic ideal of hero as both object and

instigator that Helen Lovatt acknowledges.[617] As the movement nears its end, this momentum starts to unravel: each melodic phrase extends to the start on the first beat again (for instance, bar 194 in the first violins), each ascent and descent becomes more ambiguous as Vaughan Williams increasingly varies the melody and order of its pitches, and the number of imitative or overlapping parts increases. By bar 197, all of the independent lines have found their way to essentially one line, based on the motivic content presented by the bass parts in Figure 1. This material has its origins in the 'Heroism' theme, but has been greatly varied. Instead of creeping up a stepwise scale, these final bars highlight two perfect fifths, which are reached by leaps (occasionally embellished by passing notes). Much more conventionally heroic, Hugh Ottaway claims that this is the most optimistic point in the symphony, concluding grandly with an *allargando* and greater unity in the orchestral texture and melodic content, despite the lack of tonal closure in the final three bars (201-203).[618] Here, heroism is more about willingness and excitement about undertaking a quest than the struggle; the imagined triumph is glorious, yet an unrealistic representation of what lies ahead. The material that ends the first symphony never returns in the same way. After the ordeal that Scott and his crew undergo, Vaughan Williams encourages listeners to reject nostalgic views of an expedition that was chasing an unrealistic ideal, presenting pessimism about accepting the "given" narrative.[619] As Julian Horton notes, the 'Heroism' theme's transformation at the end of the fifth movement responds to Scott's failure.[620]

[617] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 347. M. Gregory Kendrick, *The Heroic Ideal*, p. 3-5.
[618] Hugh Ottaway, *Vaughan Williams Symphonies*, p. 51.
[619] Julian Horton deems this a particularly Adornian brand of pessimism. Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 226.
[620] Ibid, p. 216+219.

As Grimley notes, the reprise of the 'Heroism' theme in the fifth movement largely follows the same structure and basic construction of the opening the first movement, creating a cyclical or symmetrical feel.[621] However, the changes Vaughan Williams makes are revealing and demonstrate the reflective purpose of the movement, contemplating the expedition in light of its ultimate failure and the power of nature evoked in the inner movements. Beginning from bar 130 and ending in bar 172, the 'Heroism'-based material is much shorter than the opening of the first movement, with certain phrases truncated or absent. On occasions, the texture is altered, for instance, the third flute being absent in bars 133-136 compared to bars 4-7 of the first movement. However, although the fifth movement version is very similar in terms of timbre to the first movement, the shortening of the phrases and compression of the build-up to the climax (bar 162) creates a different listening experience to the previous version. Despite moving at a slow tempo, the reprisal of the 'Heroism' theme seems rushed and unconvincing, diminishing the impact of the climax. Similarly, the transition from the 'Heroism' material to the icy Antarctic characterisation through the vocal parts (discussed in greater detail below) is also much shorter than the first movement, providing a sense of heroic momentum dying away quickly, particularly through the rhythmic diminution of the 'Heroism' melodic material in the lower woodwind and strings (bars 170-172). This conclusion to the fifth movement suggests the fragility of the expedition crew's heroism in the face of nature's power, reflecting on depictions of nature earlier in the symphony. Compared to the first movement's presentation of the 'Heroism' theme, the fifth movement is more pessimistic, encouraging the listener to question Scott's heroism in light of Antarctica's strength and power.

[621] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 126.

In spite of this pessimistic ending, some of the most overtly "heroic"-sounding material of the symphony appears at the beginning of the fifth movement, following the bleakness of the inner movements' representation of Antarctica. The brass (initially trumpets, later joined by horns) perform a series of complex fanfares over rolling snare drum, triangle, and furious trills in the lower woodwind and strings, representing an attempt to re-assert Scott's significance after three movements dedicated more or less to depicting the Antarctic.[622] However, the fanfare lines are distorted from the more typical perfect fourths and fifths by heavy chromaticism, which both destabilises any sense of the opening's tonality and provides a sense that this heroism may be failing. This is certainly the impression given by the movement's overall trajectory: the fanfares are followed by (and sometimes combined with) the 'Heroism' theme's reprise, but the final stages of the movement return to the vocal and wind machine material that evokes the biting wind and cold of Antarctica before fading away into nothing (which will be discussed in greater detail below). Neither the fanfares nor the 'Heroism' theme can distract from the ultimately tragic ending. According to Frank Howes, Vaughan Williams lays greater emphasis on Scott's defeat than he does on his achievements, which further distances Scott from the epic hero ideal.[623] This does not mean that *Sinfonia Antartica* cannot be (an) epic, but rather that Scott's distance from the epic heroic ideal does not encourage that view.

The heroic fanfares that begin the fifth movement are a notable example of how Vaughan Williams's orchestration and use of colour can provide the impression of

[622] For example, Wagner's leitmotif for Siegfried in the *Ring* cycle is based on a fanfare. Thomas S. Grey, "Leitmotif, temporality, and musical design in the *Ring*" in ed. Thomas S. Grey, *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 95. Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 80. Hugh Ottaway, *Vaughan Williams Symphonies*, p. 53.
[623] Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 69.

stronger, more stable heroism when the material in fact lacks such qualities. There are many examples of the opposite – the allegedly "heroic" material being exposed as insecure, even weak – to demonstrate the insignificance and inadequacy of heroism in the face of nature, one of which appears in bars 123-129 of the fifth movement. Presented in *pianissimo* woodwind and strings, the theme retains its characteristics chromaticism, but its quiet dynamic and *tremolo* timbre (in the strings) create a lack of confidence and an unsettled feeling. The minimal accompaniment means that the melodic material is relatively unsupported, while the (unresolved) tritone highlighted by the accompanying parts (piano and lower brass) heightens the tonal ambiguity of the theme's chromaticism.[624] This presentation of the fanfare material is a far cry from the boldness of the movement's opening, highlighting how unconvincing the material is as a heroic signifier when not supported by particular orchestration and colour choices. As bars 123-129 lead to the reprisal of the 'Heroism' theme, they provide an ominous end to a movement that seemed to set itself up as a celebration of heroic achievement. Also, the phrase does not provide a stable starting point for the 'Heroism' theme's reappearance. As for colour and timbre, the fanfares that initially open the fifth movement may seem the closest to overt archetypal heroism, but later renditions of that material problematise its association with the bold, brash heroism of the ancient ideal. Instead, the quieter, more troubled versions of both the 'Heroism' theme and fanfares demonstrate that a more modern version of heroism is an appropriate framework for considering Scott. Some presentations of the heroic thematic material are so quiet and unstable that they could be missed entirely by the listener, part of a wider de-emphasis of the hero within Vaughan Williams's

[624] Erik Heine identifies the tritone as a particularly significant interval for the large-scale melodic and harmonic construction of the symphony. Erik James Heine, *Musical Recycling: A Study and Comparison of Ralph Vaughan Williams' Film Score for "Scott of the Antarctic" with Sinfonia Antartica (Symphony No. 7),* Master's dissertation, The University of Arizona, 2001, p. 28.

interpretation of the Scott legend, a forward-thinking tendency that would become a more common feature in more modern evocations of the epic meta-category.

The inner movements of *Sinfonia Antartica* notably lack much of the material established in the first movement as being associated with heroism.[625] Frank Howes is among the many commentators that have recognised that certain passages of the second movement correspond to scenes in *Scott* that present the penguins and other wildlife of Antarctica, while the third movement's title ('Landscape') also illustrates that the primary focus of the inner movements is depicting the Antarctic.[626] This is not to say that there is no material in these three movements derived from the 'Heroism' theme, but rather that focusing on colour, timbre, and other "effects" takes over from parameters more conventionally associated with heroism (notably melody). Within the inner movements, Vaughan Williams exploits the huge range of instruments (although all the vocal parts are absent) and many performance techniques (including *pizzicato*, mutes, *tremolo*, *glissandi*, tone markings – like *cuivré* for the horns in bar 4 of the third movement – particular beaters for percussion, and so on) for particular colouristic purposes. The end of the third movement (from bar 143) offers a useful example: after the monumentality of the organ episode, the rest of the orchestra slowly fades away, using thinning texture, mutes, quiet dynamic markings, and gradual rhythmic augmentation to suggest an increasing sense of distance. Even the shivering cymbal swells in bars 146-159 imitate the chilling Antarctic wind. Vaughan Williams's focus in the inner movements is largely on 'the physical sensations of ice, or wind blowing over the great, uninhabited desolation' of Antarctica, which is indicative of the expedition's

[625] This is very similar to Sibelius's approach in *Kullervo*, discussed previously.
[626] Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 74.

central conflict of man versus nature.[627] The inner movements provide space for nature to dominate the atmospheric content and develop the impression of Antarctica as a formidable opponent. Vaughan Williams's depiction of the Antarctic in the inner movements will be discussed in greater depth below in relation to the fantasy-reality binary and temporality. Antarctica's dominance in the inner movements acts as a critique of humanity, suggesting that the expedition had little chance of success and was pursuing heroism for heroism's sake. Vaughan Williams's de-emphasis of the hero demonstrates a distinctly modern problematisation of the hero and hero figure as pursuing something anachronistic and unsuitable for the twentieth century.

By focusing almost wholly on depicting the Antarctic, the inner movements show the relative irrelevance of Scott (and his expedition, to perhaps a lesser extent) for the central message of the symphonic narrative. As the original story of the expedition is so well-known, Vaughan Williams did not need to articulate particular narrative events in order to convey the immense power of nature, so Scott's role becomes almost negligible. De-emphasising the hero not only highlights Antarctica's formidable nature, but also reflects the decreasing importance of the hero in the epic meta-category during the twentieth century. Vaughan Williams does not glorify Scott; if anything, he glorifies the Antarctic. By restricting material explicitly connected to heroism to the outer movements, Vaughan Williams demonstrates the foolishness of seeing Scott as a hero.[628] Besides reminding the listener of Scott's posthumous idolisation, the outer movements' presentation of heroism also acknowledges how that idolisation is based

[627] Daniel Goldmark, "Music, Film and Vaughan Williams" in ed. Byron Adams and Robin Wells, *Vaughan Williams Essays* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publshing Limited, 2003), p. 221.
[628] Ursula Vaughan Williams describes how her husband was frustrated by the unnecessary ways that the expedition risked lives in pursuit of heroism. Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 279. Daniel Goldmark, "Music, Film and Vaughan Williams", p. 207.

on outdated ancient ideals and avoids the complexities of the modern hero. Vaughan Williams frames pre-existing views of Scott as a nostalgic anachronism. As narrative events are not articulated and the symphony is non-teleological, *Sinfonia Antartica* is not so much concerned with the hero figure, but rather historical perception of Scott. Without a clear musical presence, Scott's heroism is exposed as flawed, or even foolhardy in the face of Antarctic conditions. Vaughan Williams's disgust at the expedition's logistical and judgement failings is manifest here by a lack of overtly heroic musical devices and colours (especially in the central movements), arguably suggesting that this expedition provides an example of when *not* to try to fulfil heroic aspirations.[629]

The fantastical and the representative in Antarctica

Because the hero figure plays a minor part in *Sinfonia Antartica*, Antarctica's role is somewhat more significant than in both the telling of the original expedition (in Scott's diary) and *Scott*. Antarctica represents not only the quest's obstacle, but is also a metaphor for the uncontrollable power of nature and a warning against its idealisation. As Julian Horton argues, Vaughan Williams makes it clear that the vastness, mercilessness, and mystery of Antarctica, which the expedition crew vastly underestimated, negates its capacity to be conquered by a heroic figure.[630] Vaughan Williams portrays the Antarctic as having two distinct characters: on the one hand, it is a magical, fantastical place of glittering ice and incredible wildlife; on the other, it is hostile and desolate with potentially fatal consequences, a more representative impression of the South Pole region. Michael Beckerman has suggested that the

[629] Vaughan Williams's views about Scott's quest are recorded by: Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 287.
[630] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 218.

Antarctic is 'a kind of "other" […,] part neutral proving ground, part exotic locale, and part monster from a science fiction novel', framing Antarctica as having a multi-layered character.[631] Vaughan Williams's depiction of the region shows a complex intertwining of fantasy and representation that does not map neatly onto the symphony's structure.[632] Instead, the coexistence of fantasy and representation provides a sense of the ever-fluctuating experience of Antarctica, both for the expedition crew and the audience. Vaughan Williams's dual characterisation of the fantastic and the representative in Antarctica also plays into the epic meta-category's tendency to balance or mediate fact and fiction. However, the most overtly "representative" Antarctic material appears in structurally significant moments (most notably the very end of the symphony), which suggests that the "representative" ultimately has the upper-hand and establishes Antarctica's threat to humans as very present. Vaughan Williams's dual characterisation nonetheless does not deal with absolutes: the fantastic and the representative are often blurred, an ambiguity that is characteristic of the epic meta-category. By having tension between fantasy and representation, *Sinfonia Antartica* presents the Scott narrative as occupying a space between legend and history, with Antarctica as the primary means of expression.

Establishing a sense of geographical, topographical, atmospheric, and epic distance from Britain is an important means of manifesting Antarctica's fantastical side.[633] The symphony's tonal landscape is a particular notable means of cultivating this distance. According to Julian Horton, the overall tonal centre of *Sinfonia Antartica* is G, with E-

[631] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 50.
[632] Beckerman views the fantasy-representation intertwining as a tension between depicting history and presenting a story. Ibid, p. 42.
[633] This is not to say that the "realistic" side of Antarctica is not also characterised in part by a sense of distance from Britain, but rather that the "fantastical" side articulates this more explicitly and aestheticises this distance as an embodiment of fantasy.

flat used as a counterpole, which combine at the end of the work in a bitonal conclusion.[634] The combination of G and E-flat (or transposed versions) permeates almost every page of *Sinfonia Antartica*, including the beginning of the 'Heroism' theme. In the context of Vaughan Williams's complex use of octatonic and modal pitch collections as the harmonic basis of the symphony, the distance between G and E-flat is not particularly great, being related hexatonically, octatonically, and in whole-tone scales. Although they do not correspond directly to Britain and Antarctica – Britain is not depicted explicitly, but rather exists as a metaphor for "home" and the familiar – the tonal poles function as competing forces, generating a tension that the symphony cannot resolve, tonally representing the tension between fantasy and representation on a large scale. The symphony's tonal poles frequently encourage an unstable harmonic background for localised moments, often characterised by simple chromatic shifts, which provides a sense of distance. This is particularly clear in bars 56-64 in the third movement (later repeated and altered in bars 76-82), where almost the whole orchestra perform a single line across many different octaves (often) in extreme registers (see Figure 11).

[634] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 217.

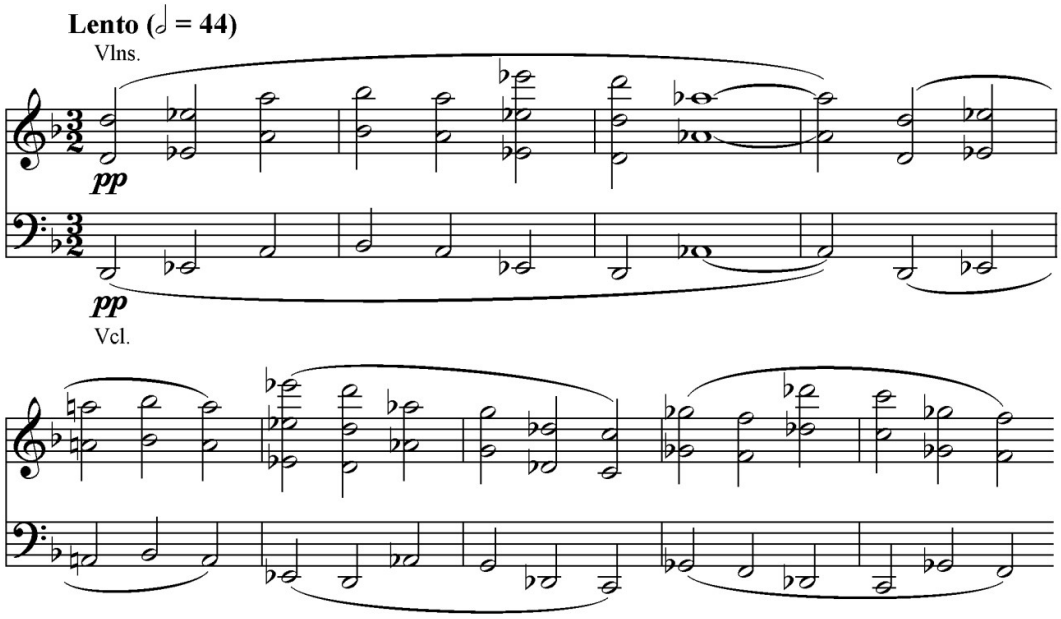


Figure 11: Third movement, bars 56-64, string lines (representative of the whole orchestra)

Not only creating a sense of space in the sparse, octave texture, the chromatic sliding of this line, with almost every note preceded or followed by a note only a semitone away, creates tension and a sense of suspension through instability. As the third movement is titled 'Landscape', it is not inappropriate to interpret bars 56-64 as depicting the shifting ice or the unpredictably rising and falling terrain, but the meandering movement is so rootless that it almost has a supernatural quality. Antarctica is untamed and thus its musical characterisation does not strive to be familiar to the listener. The sense of atmospheric distance here demonstrates that Antarctica's "fantastical" side can tread the line between intriguingly mysterious and ominous. As Horton notes, Vaughan Williams uses 'a repertoire of ecological 'noises'' as part of his characterisation of Antarctica's "fantastical" side, which have the added side-effect of cultivating a sense of distance.[635] Antarctica's distance from the listener

[635] Ibid, p. 218.

seems epic because of its "fantastical" attributes, in spite of the relative historical closeness of the expedition and the increased awareness the general public has of Antarctica in the twenty-first century.[636] The sense of epic distance manufactured here reflects the tension between the familiar and unfamiliar that Antarctica possesses, which exists outside of time, relevant both historically (for Scott) and for the audience's present.

A sense of geographical distance is more explicitly cultivated by the fourth movement's two central themes that, according to Julian Horton, represent love and death.[637] In this movement, Antarctica's character is developed by expressing how humans experience the continent, both at a distance and in person. Heard first, the "love" theme is somewhat misleadingly labelled, as it represents the concern of loved ones at home and their efforts to suppress knowledge of what the crew face.[638] The melody, first heard on the oboe (from bar 5), is built around three melodically and rhythmically simple arch shapes, with the occasional flattened third modal inflection that gives it a pastoral feel. As Raymond Monelle has argued in relation to other music, the oboe and harp scoring encourages the pastoral aesthetic, both having pastoral associations found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nationalistic opera, evoking the ideology of Herderian nationalism that the "true spirit" of the nation is found in the rural

[636] Public awareness of and interest in the polar regions has stemmed from various sources, including increased media coverage of climate change research and popular nature documentaries on the regions, such as *Frozen Planet* (2011). As an example of increased media coverage, under the topic heading 'Antarctic', BBC News online have 340 articles published between 22/02/2017 and 19/11/2020 (information correct as of 20/11/2020). "Antarctic", BBC News, available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/c207p54m4qet/antarctic, accessed 20/11/2020.

[637] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 219.

[638] The tradition of "love" themes in orchestral, operatic, and film repertoires, in particular, is well-established, usually expressing some form of romantic love or passion. Typical examples include the love themes from Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* and John Williams' "Marion's Theme" in his score to the first Indiana Jones film, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981).

population.[639] Consistent with his reputation as a key figure in the 'revival of British music', the "love" theme thus evokes an idealised image of "home", which establishes geographical distance.[640] As both a reminder of home for the crew and an expression of the concern of those back in England, the "love" theme is bittersweet. While each phrase's arch shape and same starting and ending notes maintain hope of reunion, the theme simultaneously hints at a sense of inevitable disaster by highlighting two particular intervals. The flattened thirds contrast with the symphony's emphasis elsewhere on the major third (as embodied by its two main tonal poles of E-flat and G), providing a darker tone that is unconventional for a "love" theme. These flattened thirds create many melodic and harmonic tritones, which are present through the modal and octatonic collections that dominate the symphony's tonal palette, but are particularly unsettling in an otherwise largely diatonic theme. These tritones are thus sufficient to prevent the melody from wholly evoking the idealised innocence of folksong. In a sense, the flattened thirds and tritones regularly dispel or challenge any denial about what the crew are facing. The image of home cannot sustain the morale of those participating in the expedition or those observing it, despite its idealisation through the folksong style. Fantasy and representation collide in the "love" theme, which expresses both the undying hope of being reunited and the knowledge that the crew face significant obstacles. The "love" theme's more pessimistic impulses prevent a distortion of that distance, acknowledging the heightened worry and stress experienced both by the expedition crew and those who waited at home. However,

[639] Raymond Monelle, *The musical topic: hunt, military and pastoral* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 233+247. William A. Wilson, "Herder, Folklore and Romantic Nationalism" *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1973), p. 832.

[640] Hugh Ottaway and Alain Frogley, "Vaughan Williams, Ralph" *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, available at http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42507?q=vaughan+williams&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit, accessed 05/12/2017.

geographical distance does undoubtedly have a romanticising function, framing the expedition crew and their loved ones in the same manner as soldiers and loved ones in ancient epics, but that function is critiqued from within. Questioning the romanticisation of the Antarctic expedition is one of the most explicit ways that the symphony exposes epic's blurring of fantasy and representation. The "love" theme offers one example of how *Sinfonia Antartica* questions the importance that the meta-category places on the fantasy-representation tension, and how that can be misleading when applied to a "real-life" tale.

However, Antarctica's "fantastical" side can also border on the comedic 'light relief'.[641] The most widely noted example of this is the second movement's use of material that allegedly represents the penguins that the expedition crew encountered in Antarctica, which appears for the first time in bars 66-69 of the second movement (see Figure 12).

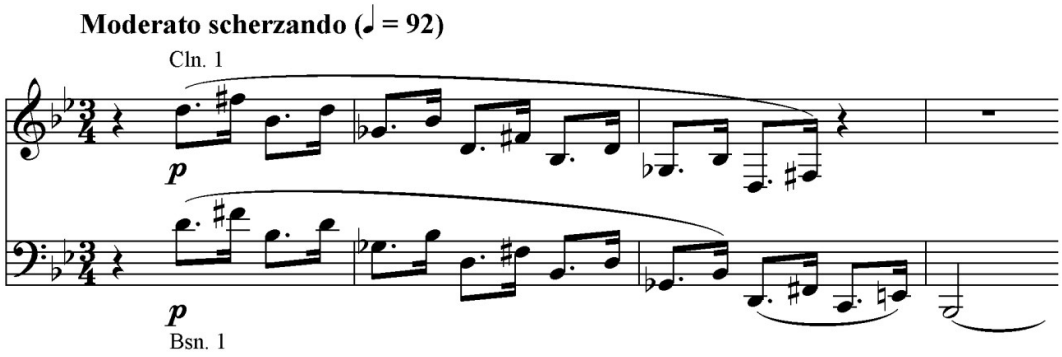


Figure 12: the theme for the penguins, second movement, bars 66-69

Built on a series of descending major thirds that outline a whole-tone scale (or, as Day describes it, two interlocked tritone arpeggios), the comedic effect of this theme comes from its seemingly endless descent and the ungainly, irregular leaps between

[641] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 279.

the end of each dotted rhythm and the next.[642] Accompanied simply by quiet, high register string trills, this is one of the work's more light-hearted moments, evoking the clumsy, playful nature of penguins, and one of the few parts of the symphony that relates directly to the footage of *Scott*. Here, Antarctica is merely a setting that frames these amusing animals: the filmic connections of this section of the symphony encourage the feel of a nature documentary, conveying a sense of observing the surroundings rather than experiencing them. Perhaps more than anything, this sense of observation is what characterises Antarctica's "fantastical" side, since it lacks any awareness of the true conditions that the expedition crew faced. They may have seen penguins, but they did so in a wilderness of snow, ice, blizzards, and other difficult weather phenomena, and isolating the depiction of animals from their surroundings makes the contrast between the "fantastical" and "representative" versions of Antarctica starker. The "fantastical" side of Antarctica is thus characterised as something to be observed at a distance rather than something that can be experienced in person. This characterisation almost suggests that the epic distance cultivated by separating observation and experience was present during the expedition, as well as being an audience phenomenon. Antarctica's "fantastical" side is almost dangerous because its distance from the representation of the landscape misleads both observer and participant into believing that the place poses no threat.[643] By employing the "fantastical" as a way of exposing how the expedition crew underestimated nature, Antarctica is very much an active participant in the Scott tale and the symphony, occupying a space typical of the epic between being believable and inconceivable.

[642] James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, p. 215.
[643] In this regard, Antarctica could be compared to the Sirens from Greek mythology, who lure men away from their quests into danger.

In its most explicit moments, the "representative" side of Antarctica, evoking the continent's cold, desolate, barren expanse of ice, is characterised particularly by colour, texture and harmonic motion. The "representative" attributes are often isolated and combined with other material to represent a lurking sense of danger in the background, but hostile Antarctica is conveyed most unequivocally in the first and fifth movements.[644] Juxtaposed with the 'Heroism' theme material, Antarctica is scored through the wordless female chorus and soprano soloist, harp, *tremolo* strings, low clarinets, and, in particular for Hugh Ottaway, assorted percussion, including a wind machine.[645] The fact that human voices are used to depict nature may seem ironic: *Sinfonia Antartica* depicts humans as viewing themselves as separate enough from the natural world to be unaffected by its laws and forces. But, the voices' textless setting disembodies them, as Beckerman suggests, and detaches them from human cultivation of language, blurring the bodily and environmental.[646] The chorus and soloist thus depict 'a landscape devoid of humanity and indifferent to human suffering'.[647] By dehumanising the voices, Vaughan Williams makes the 'human voices stand for impersonal forces' and focuses on the colouristic properties of the voice, using parameters like register and dynamic to give the chorus and soloist a haunting quality.[648] The chorus may have three parts (SSA), but largely unison texture provides a sense of loneliness and isolation. Small dynamic swells (such as the two found in bars 71-72 of the first movement, which are also found in the accompanying horns, harp, and strings) imitate the constant roaring of the wind, even at a *piano* dynamic. The

[644] Bars 68-85 and 173-end respectively.
[645] Hugh Ottaway, *Vaughan Williams Symphonies*, p. 50. James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, p. 212-213.
[646] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 54. Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 72.
[647] Daniel Goldmark, "Music, Film and Vaughan Williams", p. 226.
[648] James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, p. 213. Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 70. Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", pg 54. Daniel Goldmark, "Music, Film and Vaughan Williams", p. 224+226.

soloist's first two entries occur on the fourth and final beat of the bar, which creates some metrical ambiguity, as the half-bar harmonic shifts in the accompanying horns, harp, and strings are only by a semitone and are thus almost imperceptible. An ominous tone is also provided by the melodic and harmonic tritones present and the bass drum and double bass articulation of the last beat of each bar. Vaughan Williams instructs the horns to play muted and the strings (bar the double bass) to play *sul ponticello*, both of which create an icy tone. Combined with the wind machine, these passages evoke the 'bleak' Antarctic environment and do not attempt to obscure the region's almost sinister character.[649]

These vocal passages, however, rely on colour more than any other parameter to create a sense of the Antarctic environment.[650] In both movements, the melodic, harmonic, and textural material is not significantly dissimilar to the rest of the symphony. The use of octatonic scales, the use of *tremolo*, the pedal notes, and the subtle semitone harmonic shifts present in the vocal passages are all common features throughout *Sinfonia Antartica*, but they adopt a new colour palette for both atmospheric and structural purposes. Each vocal passage is like a miniature tableau that reminds the listener of the Antarctic's true nature, but its underlying material is present throughout. Nowhere is this more obvious than the very end of the symphony, where the lower strings, chorus, and percussion (including the wind machine) 'die […]

[649] According to Daniel Grimley, Vaughan Williams started confronting the long-standing idealisation of landscape in his *Pastoral Symphony*, with *Sinfonia Antartica* continuing the idea. Daniel M. Grimley, 'Landscape and Distance: Vaughan Williams, Modernism and the Symphonic Pastoral' in ed. Matthew Riley, *British music and modernism, 1895-1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 149. Constantine Santas, 'The Epic in Film: from myth to blockbuster' (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2008), p. 11. Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 81.

[650] Daniel Goldmark refers to Vaughan Williams' use of colour as depicting 'written images'. Em Marshall, *Music in the Landscape: How the British Countryside Inspired our Greatest Composers* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 2011), p. 92+94. Daniel Goldmark, "Music, Film and Vaughan Williams", p. 221.

away' into nothingness, rendering a definitive end of the symphony imperceptible.[651] The silence that follows is so similar that it can evoke the same cold atmosphere, suggesting that the Antarctic's hostility continues to this day: the Antarctic environment has not changed, existing as history and present, fact and fiction. Historical and epic distance between audience and music are blurred (aided, as Beckerman observes, by how well-known the expedition story is), reminding the audience that these terrible conditions are not mere fantasy.[652] Following this collapsing of historical and epic distance, the most evocative representation of Antarctica represents a warning against romanticising the continent. Even though moving away from the meta-category's archetypal blurring of fantasy and representation, this moralising aspect of *Sinfonia Antartica* is still reminiscent of the epic.

Despite their emphasis on cultivating the harsh, cold, desolate atmosphere of Antarctica, the vocal passages also provide a sense of the intrigue that led explorers to the 'wild unknown' of the continent.[653] Vaughan Williams often relies upon the modal and octatonic collections from the symphony's wider tonal structures to provide localised functions as exotic signifiers. The vocal lines explicitly betray this signification, evoking a generic sense of the unfamiliar and mysterious that Daniel Grimley has likened to the image of the Sirens from Greek mythology.[654] The solo soprano's line

[651] James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, p. 217. Em Marshall, *Music in the Landscape*, p. 94. David B. Knight, *Landscapes in Music*, p. 138-140.
[652] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 49. Kirsten Yri, "Inverting the Epic", p. 612.
[653] Daniel Goldmark, "Music, Film and Vaughan Williams", p. 224.
[654] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 121.

particularly highlights the augmented second, an interval present in the movement's modal collection that often receives the label of "exotic" (see Figure 13).[655]



Figure 13: soprano soloist line, first movement, bars 77-81

Supporting Beckerman's "Othering" of Antarctica, the "exotic" associations of the augmented second as part of the symphony's large-scale extended tonality reflect the continent's ability to inspire both fear and intrigue. Antarctica represented (and to a certain extent still does) a 'enduringly fascinating' domain to be conquered, one of the planet's last wildernesses, and its "exotic" characterisation mirrors both its appeal (as a challenge, as a large land mass, as a means to prove excellence for 'Great Men') and the danger that it represents (as the "Other" was feared).[656] Ursula Vaughan Williams used the term "exotic" to describe the appeal that the Antarctic held for her husband when initially approached to score *Scott*, so that sense of cautious fascination with the continent remained even after Scott's expedition.[657] Particularly in the opening of the first movement, the "exotic" quality of the work's modal pitch collections establishes a sense of historical distance between listener and music, akin to the "once-upon-a-time" opening of fairytales: the Scott expedition is mythicised with 'the romantic aura

[655] For a list of features or devices that have historically been identified as having "exotic" connotations, see: Derek B. Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style" *Musical Quarterly*, vol. 82, no. 2 (1998), p. 327.
[656] Elizabeth Baigent, "'Deeds not words'? Life writing and early twentieth-century British polar exploration" in eds. Simon Naylor and James R. Ryan, *New spaces of exploration: geographies of discovery in the twentieth century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 27+30.
[657] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 279.

of pole seeking', rather than presenting historical fact.[658] The "exotic" is appropriated here as a world-building device, regardless of its ideological implications. However, modal collections and their "exotic" signification are not restricted to musical material that represents Antarctica: the 'Heroism' theme contains augmented seconds (or its inversion, the diminished seventh) and fragments of whole-tone scales in both its melodic and harmonic content, which suggests that Scott and his crew are "Others" within Antarctica. Figure 14, which outlines the first violin part for the opening fourteen bars of the first movement, sometimes melody and sometimes accompaniment, offers a useful example:

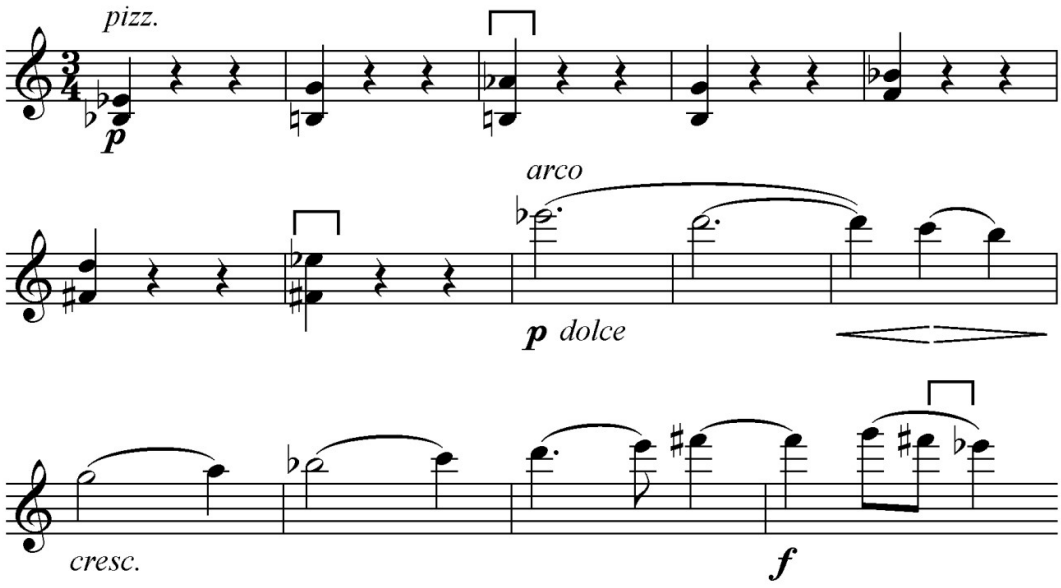


Figure 14: first violin, first movement, bars 1-14 (augmented seconds/diminished sevenths marked with brackets)

By scoring material related to both humans nature using modal collections as an "exotic" signifier, these associations are rendered ambiguous. Foregrounding intervals within modal collections with a history of exotic signification may suggest that its

[658] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 49-50.

subject (humans or nature) is "exotic", or that that subject is simply from a past, seemingly inaccessible age. Arguably, the presence of "exotic" signifiers in both sets of material implies that humans are the Other in the Antarctic landscape as much as Antarctica is an Other compared to human civilisation. Modal pitch collections function as a distancing device, demonstrating that "fantastical" impressions of Antarctica actually reflect the way that Scott's expedition has been transformed into a legend more than the icy continent. In a sense, Vaughan Williams's modal palette is a large-scale means for monumentalisation that attempts to present Scott's expedition as an epic.

In the middle of the third movement, as Frank Howes describes, the listener is confronted with the ultimate reminder of nature's monumental power in the form of an organ interlude (bars 127-142).[659] This passage could be interpreted in terms of a sublime experience. However, Daniel Grimley deems the Romantic sublime inappropriate for depicting Antarctica's mechanical, unnatural character, so the organ passage is better suited to interpretation based around more modern evocations of the sublime, where the experience emphasises terror over amazement.[660] Acting as a mid-movement and mid-symphony climax, the organ and orchestra material is strikingly dissimilar to that on other side (both locally and globally), which cultivates a tension between the familiar and unfamiliar (or more specifically between place and space, for Grimley) to provide a disconcerting ambiguity of meaning.[661] The 'epiphanic

[659] Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 76.
[660] The postmodern sublime, for instance, often involves questioning of human agency, which is particularly appropriate for *Sinfonia Antartica* with its central battle between man and nature. Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 142. Iain Boyd Whyte, "The Sublime: An Introduction" in eds. Roald Hoffmann and Iain Boyd Whyte, *Beyond the Finite: The Sublime in Art and Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 3.
[661] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 135.

entry of the organ' that interrupts the previous orchestral material thus does not signify anything in particular, instead evoking the monumentality and overwhelming nature of the sublime experience.[662] Erik Heine and Michael Beckerman both interpret this organ passage as depicting triumph over a particularly difficult obstacle – humanity conquering nature – but little about the material suggests the positivity of a victory.[663] At a *fff* dynamic, the organ moves in parallel chords (marked *sostenuto*), with a strong grounding bass line, yet little sense of a tonal centre owing to the parallel motion of the chords.[664] Even when *fortissimo*, the rest of the orchestra struggles to assert itself against the might of the organ: the two are engaged in a tense conflict that comes to a head in bar 141, but does not melodically or harmonically resolve. It remains ambiguous, however, as to whether the organ and orchestra represent nature and humanity respectively, vice versa, or another such conflict, largely owing to the section's inconclusive ending. At first, the orchestra are mainly active when the organ sustains a long chord (for instance, bar 128^3-129^3). But, by bar 136^2, the orchestra become more explicitly antagonistic, with relentlessly syncopated octave B-naturals that jar against the flatter tones of the organ, heightening the sense of conflict. The end of this organ passage is thus something of an anti-climax, with the organ merely fading away and the orchestra starting to chromatically revolve around B before eventually thinning texturally and leading straight into the fourth movement. For such an intense interlude, this organ passage ends with no clear victor, which subverts the typical role of the (especially epic) sublime in facilitating the hero's triumph. This organ

[662] Ibid.
[663] Erik James Heine, *Musical Recycling*, p. 24. Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 52.
[664] Daniel Grimley argues that tonal centres function more as ideals in *Sinfonia Antartica*, with tonality being governed more by pitch collections and particular intervals. So, the lack of an immediately identifiable tonal centre in the organ passage is not highly unusual within the context of the symphony, but it does add to the somewhat disturbing and unsettling nature of the sublime experience that the organ passage reflects. Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 131.

interlude, then, is not so much a sublime conflict but a warning from the sublime "object" (be that nature or the divine as present in nature) to not underestimate its strength. Followed by the uncertainty of the movement's conclusion, this sublime experience puts greater weight on terror and fear than it does on amazement. What Vaughan Williams does here is frame the representation of Antarctica's hostility and ability to inspire 'tragic despair' within an aesthetic category with prominent supernatural or fantastical associations.[665]

Sinfonia Antartica's exaggerated "cultural epistemology" and lack of teleology

One of *Sinfonia Antartica*'s most significant means of commenting on the assumed "epic" nature of Scott's expedition and its cinematic adaptation is its particular temporality. *Sinfonia Antartica*'s lack of a written programme (beyond its first performance and some brief 'epigraphs' from poetry, psalms, and Scott's journal for each movement) and its thematic organisation reflect neither *Scott*'s plot nor the historical tale. On a basic level, the symphony has 'ultimately no teleological fulfilment': instead of following and depicting the events of the expedition narrative, the outer movements introduce and reflect on the expedition, while the inner movements are character portraits of Antarctica and the environment that Scott and his crew had to endure.[666] Vaughan Williams uses a non-teleological approach to highlight that *Sinfonia Antartica* is both a retelling of an epic and a commentary on one, concerned more with the Antarctic than with Scott, contrary to Julian Horton's claim that *Sinfonia Antartica* has 'programmatic aspirations'.[667] This commentary

[665] Hugh Ottaway, "Scott and after: The Final Phase" *The Musical Times*, vol. 113, no. 1556 (1972), p. 959.
[666] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 219. Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 127.
[667] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 199.

function allows Vaughan Williams to deal with the second key aspect of *Sinfonia Antartica*'s temporality, namely the complicated legacy of the Scott expedition. This legacy has two main areas of interest: the various media products that reproduce the Scott narrative, and how British imperialism functions or is presented within that tale. Temporality is more than simply an organisational tool in *Sinfonia Antartica*: it is a critical attribute that also enables other material to perform its own commentary. In many respects, *Sinfonia Antartica*'s temporality is the most "epic" aspect of the symphony.

As a work that explicitly reuses material and subject matter from *Scott*, the film has unsurprisingly been a comparative point from which to critically appraise *Sinfonia Antartica*. While listeners may hear *Sinfonia Antartica* as merely an arrangement of the film score, scholars like Julian Horton tend to frame the symphony as demonstrating a cinematic character.[668] However, *Sinfonia Antartica* is more complex than a rearranged version of the *Scott* score. The two works begin with the same material (the 'Heroism' theme) and many passages are shared (such as the penguins and whale sequences, as Erik Heine observes), but *Sinfonia Antartica* does not replicate *Scott*'s order of the content.[669] Vaughan Williams's original programme note for the symphony is testament to its lack of teleology, highlighting particular themes and what they accompanied in *Scott* (like the 'whale' music), but he does not openly address whether *Sinfonia Antartica* replicates the expedition narrative.[670] Although non-teleological

[668] Listeners have articulated their understanding of *Sinfonia Antartica* in light of *Scott* explicitly in sources such as the comments on YouTube videos. 'Vaughan Williams: Sinfonia Antartica [Haitnik] Shelia Armstrong', posted by Muzikazaile. 'Sinfonia Antartica: Vaughan Williams', posted by mutinyonthekitkat. Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 200.
[669] Erik James Heine, *Musical Recycling*, p. 16.
[670] Ralph Vaughan Williams, "Sinfonia Antartica" in ed. David Manning, *Vaughan Williams on Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 372-375.

temporalities are not required by epics, they often lend themselves to this function. On the one hand, the fantasy-representation tension at the heart of *Sinfonia Antartica* "epicises" the symphony's reimagining of the Scott narrative; but on the other, the lack of teleology fails to reflect the sustained struggle of the expedition, one of the most important parts of the narrative that falls within the epic meta-category umbrella. However, the most important aspect of *Sinfonia Antartica*'s non-teleological format is that it simultaneously establishes and collapses a sense of historical distance between music and listener, as the symphony combines Antarctica's timelessness (in existing outside of time) with a temporally specific version of heroism and the quest. Using the end of the symphony as an example, the way that the music simply fades to nothing both provides a sense of moving away from Antarctica and a lack of discernible difference between the early-twentieth-century Antarctic soundworld and that of the listener's listening environment. Meanwhile, the end of the symphony also characterises Antarctica as hostile, inaccessible, unconquerable, as it was seen in the early twentieth-century: nowadays, the continent has semi-permanent human residents in the form of research teams and new knowledge and equipment make treks to the South Pole much easier.[671] This does not necessarily make Antarctica habitable or somehow "tamed" by humans – new threats have emerged, including the effects of climate change – but rather that we have greater knowledge and experience of the challenges the continent presents. The non-teleological nature of *Sinfonia Antartica* enables the material to simultaneously reflect the expedition's time and provide a "universal" moral lesson about humanity underestimating nature's power.

[671] Among the most famous of these research teams is the British Antarctic Survey, which has had a permanent base on the Antarctic ice since 1956. "History of the British Antarctic Survey" British Antarctic Survey, available at https://www.bas.ac.uk/about/about-bas/history/history-of-bas/, accessed 03/11/2020.

The outer movements function as prologue and epilogue, depicting what the listener may think of the Scott narrative before and after hearing the symphony's commentary on the well-known tale. Daniel Grimley sees the 'strong framing function' of these outer movements as part of the symphony's cyclical use of themes, both using the 'Heroism' theme and the icy vocal material, which contributes to the "before-and-after" effect.[672] Although the two outer movements share thematic aspects, their differences (particularly in their structural position) are significant for highlighting the expedition's misjudgement of Antarctica's true nature. Vaughan Williams's placement of the icy vocal passage in the middle of the prologue turns it into a mere episode that the movement ultimately leaves behind, in favour of more optimistic material guided by a vision of glorious heroism. By contrast, using the same passage to conclude the symphony leaves the listener with a strong image of the desolate, bleak, tragic environment that Scott's crew faced, highlighting the tragedy of the expedition rather than its expectations of heroism. The thematic cyclicism has a comparative function, drawing attention to Vaughan Williams's commentary and contributing to the symphony's moralising aspect, which is often found within the epic meta-category. The combination of cyclicism and comparison evokes the contrast between myth and history that the epic meta-category tends to foreground. While myth presents narratives that recur at various points in time, history can provide a comparative point around which to judge the present. Combining the two thus positions *Sinfonia Antartica* in the space between myth and history that the epic typically frequents.

[672] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 124. Hugh Ottaway, *Vaughan Williams Symphonies*, p. 10.

The inner three movements are, as Daniel Grimley describes, 'character portrayals and landscape music'.[673] Although critics all have different labels for the movements (see Figure 15), they largely characterise the inner movements as tableaux, depicting scenery and/or experiential phenomenon (weather conditions, emotions, wildlife spotted) rather than taking the listener linearly through the expedition.

Scholar name	Movement 1	Movement 2	Movement 3	Movement 4	Movement 5
Ottaway[674]	Scenic panorama	Light relief	Sonority study		Resolving battle
Heine[675]	Survey of moods	Light-hearted	Climax	Struggle/death	Formless
Knight[676]	Human suffering	Geographically descriptive			Human suffering
Grimley[677]	Framing function	Character portrayals and landscape music			Framing function
Howes[678]		Geographically descriptive			
Horton[679]		Two dances movements and a slow movement			

Figure 15: Terms to describe Sinfonia Antartica*'s five movements*

The ambiguity around what each movement reflects the non-teleological construction of the symphony and also how Vaughan Williams's use of the *Scott* score material is thematically driven, rather than structurally or temporally. In other words, each movement of *Sinfonia Antartica* 'evoke[s] a general mood or atmosphere, rather than reflect[ing] a specific image' from *Scott*.[680] For example, the *Scott* score uses the 'Heroism' theme heavily for the crew's navigation of a glacier, but this theme is not

[673] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 124.
[674] Hugh Ottaway, *Vaughan Williams Symphonies*, p. 51-53.
[675] Erik James Heine, *Musical Recycling*, p. 36+52+68+79.
[676] David B. Knight, *Landscapes in Music*, p. 138.
[677] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 124.
[678] Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 73.
[679] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 214.
[680] Eric Saylor, "Music for stage and film" in ed. Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson, *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, p. 171.

given the same emphasis in the inner movements, as part of the de-emphasis of the hero and focus on depicting Antarctica during this part of the symphony. The tableau style of the inner movements thus presents a series of vistas: these are not static images (for instance, the waddling of the penguins is imitated by their theme, as discussed above), but time is not articulated by conventional boundaries of hours, days, or other similar means. Although "man versus nature" appears to be the main conflict of the symphony, as Heine claims, man wields very little power particularly in terms of temporality.[681] Instead, time is dictated by the movements and whims of the environment: nature is in control, despite humanity's best attempts to try and conquer it by adding the hero-centric material into the work. An example of nature exerting temporal control occurs at the very end of the symphony, where two bars (174 and 180) are expanded beyond the confines of their metre (in the way that a concerto soloist's cadenza can lack bar lines). Only the soprano soloist moves during these bars, but the mix of triplet and duplet rhythms with ties means that these phrases lack both a discernible metre and a sense of beginning and ending. The meandering solo lines seem dictated by the impulse of the moment rather than any kind of (human-imposed) musical parameter, aestheticising time as boundless and ungovernable.[682]

The suggestion of timelessness in the symphony's concluding bars is found elsewhere in the work. Not only is a sense of timelessness cultivated by the cyclical thematic organisation and lack of teleology (as identified by Horton and Grimley), timelessness is also highlighted by the 'episodic manner' of the second and third movements.[683]

[681] Erik James Heine, *Musical Recycling*, p. 91.
[682] For the idea of aestheticising time, see: Benedict Taylor, *The Melody of Time: Music and Temporality in the Romantic Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 91.
[683] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 214. Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 126-127. Erik James Heine, *Musical Recycling*, p. 78-79.

Containing the monumental organ passage, the third movement acts as a pivot point for the symphony, with the sublime experience of the organ freezing time 'into immobility': as James Day puts it, '[t]here is no way round *this* massive obstacle'.[684] The sublime experience is timeless in the sense that its duration is not articulated by means determined by humans: the listener or participant is at the mercy of nature, its dominance of the Antarctic environment, and how time operates within it. Both second and third movements have little repetition of material and distinctly contrasting moods, reflecting their tableau-style, which counters the sense of progress associated with the hero's journey. However, by de-emphasising the development of material, time is not articulated by ideas of progress.[685] Vaughan Williams's tendency to have sudden silences or very brief transitions exaggerates the division of and often stark contrasts between sections. For instance, the transition into the penguin material lasts a mere two beats (second movement, bar 65^{3}-66^{1}) and the organ entry (third movement, bar 127) is marked by a *fff* gong that interrupts the previous orchestral *tutti*. The timelessness evoked by the juxtaposed episodes in the second and third movements does not work in the same way that cyclical thematic organisation and a non-teleological basis do. Instead, timelessness is a product of the abrupt beginnings and endings of the episodes, sometimes interrupting one another and moving on without returning to the same material. Timelessness is here a lack of emphasis on time: the order and presentation of musical material is guided by the character of Antarctica that the inner movements paint. Erik Heine describes this organisation and presentation of material as guided by aspects of the expedition 'that are thematically related to one another', diminishing the need to measure time by means of

[684] James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, p. 215-216.
[685] James Day notes Michael Kennedy's claim that the lack of development in *Sinfonia Antartica* is partly owing to the fact that the 'Heroism' theme does not lend itself to such purposes, but. Ibid, p. 213.

development.[686] Human notions of time do not matter in such an environment. Antarctica is timeless in its longevity and lack of change through history, so Vaughan Williams attempts to mirror this by making changes of mood and material unpredictable or contrary to centuries old ideals of music as progress and development.[687]

However, *Sinfonia Antartica*'s "experiential" temporality and its critique of the expedition have done little to affect the symphony's "cultural epistemology" and its role in the wider Scott legend. Seemingly at odds with its overall failure, Scott's expedition underwent a mythologisation process following the discovery of the diary, with the production of *Scott* and *Sinfonia Antartica* embodying the peak of his popularity. There was some 'controversy over Scott' in the late twentieth-century, but it has not wholly derailed his reputation.[688] Both *Scott* and *Sinfonia Antartica* were (unsurprisingly, according to Beckerman) produced in the post-Second World War era, which saw a tension between nostalgia for pre-war times and looking hopefully to the future, having learned from past mistakes.[689] Scott's expedition thus represented an example of strong British character triumphing over terrible circumstances, even though the crew failed to fulfil the original aim of reaching the South Pole first, so the tale had considerable potential for nostalgic framing.[690] As Michael Beckerman notes, Vaughan Williams was obliged to make the *Scott* score more overtly celebratory of Scott's heroism because that was the particular aim of the film studio and producers,

[686] Erik James Heine, *Musical Recycling*, p. 15.
[687] This ideal was particularly perpetuated by the music of Beethoven. Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 45-46.
[688] Elizabeth Baigent, "'Deeds not words'? Life writing and early twentieth-century British polar exploration", p. 30+33.
[689] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 49.
[690] Beckerman links the nostalgic framing of Scott's expedition to the post-Second World War context of the film. Ibid.

but he avoided such idealisation in *Sinfonia Antartica*.[691] By avoiding a teleological narration in the symphony, Vaughan Williams problematises nostalgia around the Scott legend, rather than commenting on the events of the expedition. Polar exploration may have been an expression of power that post-war Britain was nostalgic for, but *Sinfonia Antartica* demonstrates the power of the Antarctic environment and nature to a much greater extent. While *Scott* is a nostalgic reframing of an epic, *Sinfonia Antartica* is both a product and a critique of that nostalgia.[692] For instance, the outer movements of *Sinfonia Antartica* provide time and space for introducing and reflecting on the expedition, both indulging in and problematising nostalgia around the idea of the expedition before and after the symphony is heard.

Sinfonia Antartica's critique of the nostalgia surrounding the expedition is just one part of its wider commentary on the Scott legend in post-war Britain. First and foremost, the symphony does not shy away from the fact that the expedition was a failure. Scott and his crew may represent many so-called "British" values – courage, trying one's best, to use Beckerman's examples – but *Sinfonia Antartica* challenges their framing as national heroes (for dying in the attempt to prove Britain's excellence) by minimising explicitly nationalistic content and reinforcing the dominance of nature over humanity.[693] Vaughan Williams's reputation in the British folk music revival was well-established at this point in his career, but there is very little hint of that idiom in *Sinfonia Antartica*.[694] The symphony's profile has arguably suffered as the composer's

[691] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 59.
[692] Many of Vaughan Williams' works, especially the symphonies, have been attached to post-war meanings by critics, including ideas around nostalgia. Hugh Ottaway and Alain Frogley, "Vaughan Williams, Ralph" *Grove Music Online*.
[693] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 51.
[694] For more on Vaughan Williams' role in the British music revival, see: Hugh Ottaway and Alain Frogley, "Vaughan Williams, Ralph" *Grove Music Online*.

folk-related works have been prioritised in programming and academic research.[695] Essentially, as Beckerman argues, this means that the listener's view of *Sinfonia Antartica*'s temporality (of both types) changes based on the individual's views of the heroic figure of Scott and the ideological world that he existed in, as well as that which produced the film and symphony.[696] *Sinfonia Antartica*'s presentation of Scott's expedition from a post-war perspective is unusually ambiguous, providing an early example of postmodern emphasis on multiplicity of views and interpretations. The critical literature on *Sinfonia Antartica* shows this very explicitly: for instance, while Julian Horton interprets the work as a deviation from symphonic norms, Hugh Ottaway focuses his commentary on the ultimately pessimistic message of the work and the 'abyss' that the listener is left with.[697] This ambiguity may frame the Scott legend as a more complicated historical event in light of a post-war world, but it also shows that the post-war period is not one of re-stabilisation. Vaughan Williams' use of the Scott legend encourages debate around how Britain should renegotiate its position in the world following two World Wars and the beginning of the end for the Empire. He poses question about pre-established narratives of British "legends" and successes as a key part of this process, suggesting that alleged triumphs or extraordinary events are rarely fully deserving of celebration.

Conclusion

In *Sinfonia Antartica*, Vaughan Williams provided an important commentary on understandings of said meta-category in the mid-twentieth century. The original Scott

[695] Eric Saylor makes the important point that Vaughan Williams viewed his film music as a starting point for concert music, while criticism tends to see this relationship as justification for lesser artistic value. Eric Saylor, "Music for stage and film", p. 170.
[696] Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 61.
[697] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 199-215. Hugh Ottaway, *Vaughan Williams Symphonies*, p. 46-53.

tale, preserved in his diary, is best described as a national legend rather than an epic, for the simple reason that it is the circumstances of the tale's preservation that makes it extraordinary rather than the events of the narrative, which largely show failure and disappointment. *Scott*, meanwhile, is a retelling and enhancement of that legend. *Sinfonia Antartica* is not a retelling of the tale, but rather reflects on it and questions its status as a legend. In spite of the fact that the tale presents several prominent features from the epic meta-category (including a quest and struggle), Scott's expedition is a snapshot of a particular time and space, while *Scott* and *Sinfonia Antartica* are indicative of the tale's reputation 'that seems frozen in time and space'.[698] Nevertheless, the construction of *Sinfonia Antartica* is notably different to *Scott*, which provides the framework for Vaughan Williams's commentary, even though the two works were produced only five years apart.

Sinfonia Antartica nonetheless presents some intriguing aspects of the meta-category during the twentieth century that show a distinct departure from ideals that maintained certain influence even as late as the century's first decade. Of greatest note, the centrality of the hero and the hero's journey were undoubtedly lessening as Vaughan Williams worked on *Sinfonia Antartica*. Quests undertaken by heroes (whether "real-life" or fictional) were changing to become more about personal (and by extension, national) achievement rather than defeating evil, so quests were no longer required to be teleological. Consequently, the hero's journey (as later theorised by Joseph Campbell) increasingly saw deviations and deconstructions. The flaws and mistakes of individual heroes (or those that undergo even part of the quest with them)

[698] Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Ice, and the "Geometry of Fear"", p. 116. Michael Beckerman, "The Composer as Pole Seeker", p. 58.

become more likely to have detrimental effects on the quest, rather than being temporary. *Sinfonia Antartica* demonstrates that having heroic aspirations can be dangerous: Scott is arguably a figure who 'deliberately court[s] suffering and death for the sake of the quest', so Vaughan Williams presents heroism as more than just the glory of triumph, encompassing communal responsibility and not chasing achievement recklessly.[699] As Ursula Vaughan Williams wrote, her husband 'despised heroism that risked lives unnecessarily'.[700] *Sinfonia Antartica* ultimately shows that Scott's failure to reach the South Pole first did not 'quell human folly', the circular design showing nature's continued dominance over humanity in the Antarctic.[701]

More importantly, however, *Sinfonia Antartica* demonstrates music's capacity for commenting on conceptualisations of epic. When confronted with a pre-existing narrative, music is particularly well suited to not being obliged to depict or articulate particular narrative events. Vaughan Williams exploits music's complex relationship with representation to highlight the ambiguity around whether Scott's expedition deserves to be viewed through the lens of the epic meta-category. His critique engages with not just preceding paratexts, but the wider socio-cultural significance of Scott's mission, which demonstrates an understanding of how an epic goes beyond its "text" to have wider significance. Scott is a modern example of the paradox of epic monumentality identified by Helen Lovatt, that heroic figures aiming to achieve monumental status 'must be transformed from doer to object, from viewer to viewed'.[702] In Scott's case, however, his "object" existence has blurred the reality of his "doer" actions. By illustrating that Scott's posthumous reputation does not accurately

[699] James Day, *Vaughan Williams*, p. 212.
[700] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p. 279.
[701] Julian Horton, "The later symphonies", p. 219.
[702] Helen Lovatt, *The Epic Gaze*, p. 347.

reflect the nature of his quest and achievements, Vaughan Williams presents the relatively modern view that epics, heroes, and quests often do not fit the idealised, clichéd pattern that popular and critical commentaries have tried to fit them into. In the case of Captain Scott, it is his posthumous reputation that is "epic", not *Scott* or *Sinfonia Antartica*.

Howard Shore's *The Lord of the Rings*: The Re-Imagined, Flawed Epic

Key:
Jackson's film trilogy – *LOTR*
Tolkien's novel – LOTR
Leitmotifs (after Doug Adams[703]) – *"The Shire Theme"*
CD tracks – "Bag End"

LOTR = The Lord of the Rings
Fellowship = The Fellowship of the Ring
Towers = The Two Towers
Return = Return of the King
EE = Extended Edition

Introduction

On lists of post-Milton epic literature, J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings is almost ubiquitous. According to Brian Attebery, LOTR is a modern take on both fantasy and epic, setting the standard for literary world-building.[704] For Peter Jackson, as Ian Nathan notes, the challenge of adapting LOTR into film required significant technological advances from his early career, but the idea stayed with him from his first reading of Tolkien's novel as a teenager.[705] In scoring Jackson's adaptation, Howard Shore was equally aware of the difficulties presented by LOTR, and worked closely with the filmmakers to echo the anticipated epic qualities of the films. When discussing Shore's score, it is both inadvisable and almost impossible to not refer to Jackson's and Tolkien's works in parallel.

[703] Author Doug Adams had unlimited and exclusive access to Howard Shore's scores for *LOTR*, so his labels for and work on Shore's leitmotifs forms a significant backbone for scholarly and vernacular analysis and will be used in this chapter.
[704] Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories: fantasy and the remaking of myth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 1. James Walters, *Fantasy Film: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2011), p. 3
[705] Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine: Peter Jackson and the Making of Middle-earth* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2018), p. 18.

LOTR fulfils many assumed criteria of the epic. Eighteen years in the making, spanning three volumes, 'over 1000 pages in length, made up of more than half a million words', LOTR has undeniably epic proportions.[706] Tolkien fashioned maps, illustrations, and extensive appendices on Middle-earth's history alongside the text, identified by Mark Wolf as classic examples of world-building on an epic scale.[707] The number of copies sold, while difficult to measure accurately, is astronomically high: in 2010, Publishing Perspectives claimed that approximately 150 million copies have been sold worldwide, the second-highest work of fiction and the joint seventh-highest work of literature.[708] Jackson's film adaptation has a similarly epic production profile: three films totalling 558 minutes, box office takings approaching $3bn, five years of pre-production, 438 days of principal photography, and record-breaking success at the Academy Awards.[709] But, the epic meta-category operates in *LOTR* on multiple, complex levels beyond size, scale, and mere statistics.

As with all epics, LOTR grapples with the problem of genre. LOTR is regularly labelled as a fantasy, although histories of fantasy are inconsistent about Tolkien's role in the genre. According to Dimitra Fimi, fantasy scholarship has developed two distinct "origin" narratives: the "long" view of modern-day fantasy gradually evolving from myth, legend, and folk-tale; or the "short" view, where fantasy developed in the

[706] Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 6. Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: a biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977), p. 207.
[707] Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 6.
[708] Noel L. Griese, "The Bible vs. Mao: A "Best Guess" of the Top 25 Bestselling Books of All Time" Publishing Perspectives, 7th September 2010, https://publishingperspectives.com/2010/09/top-25-bestselling-books-of-all-time/, accessed 09/04/2019.
[709] The statistic surrounding the epic production profile of *LOTR* are usefully summarised in: "*The Lord of the Rings* (film series)" Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings_(film_series), accessed 08/09/2018.

nineteenth century as a reaction to the realism movement.[710] Tolkien's frequent characterisation as the "father figure" of modern fantasy (the twentieth century onwards) reflects both his detailed world-building and his impact on the commercial success of fantasy writing (as Brian Attebery describes), important for the "short" history narrative.[711] However, Tolkien's heavy borrowing from myths, legends, sagas, and medieval texts plays into fantasy's "long" history.[712] Instead of viewing fantasy's development as linear, it is more useful to consider it in terms of its sharing of materials with other genres. As Fimi puts it, '[h]istorically, fantasy literature has mined the myths, legends, and folklore of different cultures and traditions but has used this material creatively, reshaping it to fit new contexts'.[713] The strength of Fimi's approach lies in presenting myth, legends, sagas, fantasy, folk-tales as not mutually exclusive, and instead highlighting their different purposes, following Mary Beard's idea that genres are most usefully compared on the basis of function rather than content.[714] Within this framework, LOTR combines the content *and* functions of different genres. LOTR resembles myth by teaching the reader important lessons (anti-industrialism, warning against the seductiveness of power, victory requiring loss); it is like legend or folk-tale in being a localised version of a universal story; it draws on fantasy by combining the familiar and unfamiliar to facilitate escape from the mundane; and employs the epic tropes of central heroes, a quest, large scope, and long-term narrative. Descriptions of LOTR as an epic highlight its ability to create cross-genre

[710] Dimitra Fimi, "Tolkien and the Fantasy Tradition" in ed. Claire Whitehead, *Critical Insights: The Fantastic* (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2013), p. 50-52.
[711] Brian Attebery, "Introduction: Epic Fantasy" *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2018), p. 2. Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories*, p. 6.
[712] Stemming from knowledge of medieval literature rather than medieval history, Tolkien's allusions to medieval cultures in LOTR are not necessarily historically accurate. See: Stuart Lee and Elizabeth Solopova, *The Keys of Middle-earth: Discovering Medieval Literature through the Fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien, second edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 3.
[713] Dimitra Fimi, "Tolkien and the Fantasy Tradtition", p. 56.
[714] Mary Beard referenced in Dimitra Fimi, "Tolkien and the Fantasy Tradition", p. 58.

texts, using diverse concepts and images on a grand scale, while referencing key ideas within the epic meta-category. Discussions around LOTR's generic label are critical to understanding how Tolkien's novel has historically been conceived of in epic terms.

Tolkien's LOTR

Tolkien's conception of epic literature and its importance of the development of Middle-earth is crucial for understanding Jackson's approach to his adaptation. LOTR is part of Tolkien's Middle-earth legendarium, a fantasy world with a 'mythic impulse' inhabited by races like Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits, and Orcs.[715] According to Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien believed that he was merely translating Middle-earth's history from the language of Hobbits (Frodo's Red Book), viewing it as part of Earth's history.[716] This belief has encouraged allegorical readings of LOTR in terms of events contemporaneous to Tolkien (most commonly the Second World War).[717] While Tolkien famously disliked such allegorical readings, as Frano Manni and Simone Bonechi argue, LOTR undeniably deals with major twentieth-century issues: the origins and nature of evil, industrialisation, and reliance on technology.[718] Although highlighting his love of nature, LOTR's narrative suggests that Tolkien's idealised vision of nature (exemplified by the Shire) cannot last: for instance, as Jill Delsigne acknowledges, Frodo understands that he cannot remain in the Shire after destroying

[715] Anne C. Petty, *One Ring to Bind Them All: Tolkien's Mythology* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1979), p. 2.
[716] Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: a biography*, p. 191.
[717] Franco Manni and Simone Bonechi, "The Complexity of Tolkien's Attitude Towards the Second World War" in ed. Sarah Wells, *Tolkien 2005: The Ring Goes Ever On Proceedings, Volume 1 (The Tolkien Society: Celebrating 50 Years of* The Lord of the Rings*)* Conference Proceedings, Aston University, Birmingham, 11th-15th August 2005, published by The Tolkien Society (Coventry, 2008), p. 34.
[718] Ibid. Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), p. ix. Dimitra Fimi, "Tolkien and the Fantasy Tradition", p. 57.

the Ring.[719] Alongside the prominence of the natural world, Mark Wolf argues that Tolkien's invented languages are the heart of the legendarium, shaping communities, cultures, and histories.[720]

LOTR follows a multi-year quest that is largely divided into three narrative strands. The first follows Hobbits Frodo and Sam attempting to destroy the One Ring, outlining the novel's "there and back again" structure.[721] The second follows Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli defending Middle-earth from evil forces, while Aragorn comes to terms with his destiny as heir to the throne of Gondor. The third strand shows the impact of Hobbits Merry and Pippin on the defence of Middle-earth (including rousing the Ents, defeating the Witch-King, and saving Faramir), demonstrating that anyone can affect change. Many characters share traits with stock figures or Frye-defined modes – Aragorn resembles the romantic hero and Sam the low mimetic hero) but viewing them as mere archetypes is ultimately misleading.[722] Tolkien also engages with more modern literary tropes: Sue Kim argues that Frodo's struggles with the Ring are informed by the modernist anti-hero and the postmodern reversal of the quest (aiming to destroy,

[719] Jill Delsigne, "Hobbits, Tolkien, and God: Writing Eucatastrophe and the Problem of Evil" in ed. Sarah Wells, *Tolkien 2005: The Ring Goes Ever On Proceedings, Volume 2 (The Tolkien Society: Celebrating 50 Years of* The Lord of the Rings*)*, Conference Proceedings, Aston University, Birmingham, 11th-15th August 2005, published by The Tolkien Society (Coventry, 2008), p. 27. Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring: The Extended Edition*, commentary with directors and writers, New Line Cinema (2002), accessed 02/02/2019. Kirsty Wark (presented), "Omnibus: J.R.R. Tolkien: Master of Middle-Earth" BBC2, broadcast 18:45 on 22/12/2001, 50 minutes, accessed at https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/001622D1?bcast=694253, accessed 20/01/2019. Steve Walker, *The Power of Tolkien's Prose: Middle-Earth's Magical Style* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 30. Paul Kocher, *Master of Middle-earth: the achievement of J.R.R. Tolkien* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), p. 9.

[720] Mark J. P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, p. 188.

[721] Tolkien used the same structure for his earlier novel, *The Hobbit.* Mark Atherton, *There And Back Again: J.R.R. Tolkien and the Origins of The Hobbit* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2012), p. 2.

[722] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of criticism: four essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 33-65. Beatriz Domínguez Ruiz, "The concept of masculinity in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*" in ed. Sarah Wells, *Tolkien 2005: The Ring Goes Ever On Proceedings, Volume 1*, p. 293. Steve Walker, *The Power of Tolkien's Prose*, p. 2 and 18.

rather than gain).[723] Various passages of LOTR have a level of realism – for example, the almost diary-like detail in various travelling sequences – and, as Paul Kocher suggests, Tolkien uses structures like the seasons to root Middle-earth in (a decidedly Western European) familiarity (Tolkien implicitly assumes that readers will recognise Western European societal structures as the preferable, universal norm).[724] Racially diverse, Middle-earth's characters mirror real-world divides and suspicions, and demonstrate the benefits of uniting against evil.[725] LOTR balances familiar – epic archetypes, traditional heroes – and unfamiliar – invented races and languages, the reverse quest – to build a highly believable fantasy world as per Tolkien's theory of 'subcreation'.

Shortly after beginning LOTR, as Carpenter recalls, Tolkien delivered a lecture outlining his concept of 'subcreation', that of creating a "Secondary World".[726] With the reader in the Primary World (Earth), the fantasy narrative's characters and places exist in the Secondary World (in LOTR, Middle-earth). 'Subcreation' constructs places, characters, and the vast array of laws that govern the Secondary World, including the acceptance of fantastical or supernatural entities.[727] However, as Carpenter notes, the reader must have Secondary Belief (or "willing suspension of disbelief") in the "realness" of the

[723] Sue Kim, "Beyond Black and White: Race and Postmodernism in The Lord of the Rings Films" *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 50, no. 4 (2004), p. 882-883.
[724] Steve Walker, *The Power of Tolkien's Prose*, p. 59. Paul Kocher, "Middle-earth: An Imaginary World?" in eds. Rose A. Zimbardo and Neil D. Isaacs, *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), p. 153. Andrea Ulrich, "Approaching Reality in *The Lord of the Rings*" in ed. Sarah Wells, *Tolkien 2005: The Ring Goes Ever On Proceedings, Volume 1*, p. 90.
[725] Sean Redmond and Helen Young take more negative and positive stances respectively on Middle-earth's racial relations, but both acknowledge that the world's racial landscape is complex and diverse. Sean Redmond, "The whiteness of *Rings*" in ed. Daniel Bernardi, *The Persistence of Whiteness: Race and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 91. Helen Young, "Diversity and Difference: Cosmopolitanism and "The Lord of the Rings"" *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 21, no. 3 (2010), p. 352.
[726] Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: a biography*, p. 190.
[727] Mark Wolf offers a very useful, more detailed explanation of subcreation. Mark J. P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, p. 17-25.

Secondary World regardless of evidence to the contrary; otherwise, the reader becomes hyper-aware that the Secondary World is fictitious and their separation in the Primary World.[728] Only complete and consistent Secondary Worlds, like Middle-earth, can extract Secondary Belief from the reader, according to Mark Wolf:

> While much of what Tolkien did, in terms of world-building, had already been done by others […] it was the *degree* to which he did them […] and the *quality* of his work, with meaningful details integrated into an elaborate backstory, that set a new standard for world-building.[729]

As Tanya Glofcheskie suggest, Middle-earth also highlights Primary World truths (often allegorically), such as issues around race and power.[730] Yet, Tom Shippey notes that, despite their "realistic" attributes, fantasy and subcreation are both accused of facilitating escapism.[731] According to John Garth, Tolkien views the escape offered by fantasy as 'the flight of the fugitive, not the deserter': readers to escape reality's confines by cultivating the imagination.[732] Fantasy's immersive nature requires audience participation to be effective: it combines belief (in the "unreal"), imagination (desire/ability to think beyond the "real"), and experience (of the "evidence" of fantasy) to balance fact and fiction, notably reflected by the growth in tourism inspired by both film and novel. Tourists seek out places linked with Tolkien and Jackson's version of Tolkien to manufacture encounters that recreate the reading or viewing

[728] Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: a biography*, p. 191.
[729] Mark J. P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, p. 25+131, original emphasis.
[730] Tanya Glofcheskie, "Life as a Shared Story: Narrative Freedom in *The Lord of the Rings*" in ed. Sarah Wells, *Tolkien 2005: The Ring Goes Ever On Proceedings, Volume One*, p. 133.
[731] Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, p. viii.
[732] John Garth, "Frodo and the Great War" in eds. Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, *The Lord of the Rings 1954-2004: Scholarship in Honor of Richard E. Blackwelder* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), p. 41.

experience, as Alfio Leotta claims.[733] Through subcreation, fantasy is an experience combining the real and the imagined.

In his academic writings, Tolkien uses the balance of real and imagined to differentiate between fantasy's related genres as follows: Greek myths, the root of Western fiction, described natural processes and elemental changes in personified terms; epics, legends, and sagas are localised versions of myths with ancestral heroes, transforming into folk and fairy tales as the past became more distant; and fantasy deliberately evokes strangeness, (unsuccessfully) trying to reproduce reality's inner consistency to glimpse underlying Primary World truths.[734] However, we should proceed with caution when mapping Tolkien's academic theories onto LOTR. As Tom Shippey notes, Tolkien himself inconsistently labelled the work, and publishers, critics, and readers are responsible for many of the novel's associated generic labels.[735] Since Tolkien, fantasy has increasingly become a commercial category as much as a literary genre, with retailers creating separate fantasy sections for easy access as sales rose.[736] Many Tolkienian devices (like maps, as Farah Mendlesohn notes) have become industry norms, as writers wanted to emulate his success.[737] The publishing industry has shaped Tolkien into fantasy's "father figure" and separated fantasy from other fiction. Conversely, scholarly discussions are less inclined to distance fantasy from other types

[733] Rodanthi Tzanelli, "Constructing the 'cinematic tourist': The 'sign industry' of The Lord of the Rings" *Tourist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2004), p. 24. Alfio Leotta, *Touring the Screen: Tourism and New Zealand Film Geographies* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), p. 7.

[734] These generic definitions are not mutually exclusive, and LOTR's position is unclear, despite being most commonly labelled a fantasy by critics. Tolkien's infamous claim that his Middle-earth legendarium provided England with a mythology further complicates the issue. [734] J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" in ed. Christopher Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), p. 123+138-139.

[735] Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, p. 221.

[736] Sometimes, a separate "Tolkienian fantasy" label was used, owing to the considerable increase in fantasy writing that openly demonstrated an (occasionally suspicious) significant debt to Middle-earth. For example, see: Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories*, p. 6.

[737] Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), p. 14.

of fiction, but, as Richard Mathews puts it, it is 'nearly impossible to overstate Tolkien's importance in the history of fantasy'.[738]

Jackson's and Shore's *LOTR*

Director Peter Jackson's first encounter with LOTR remained in his mind as the ultimate fantasy project while he began his filmmaking career.[739] After early horror and supernatural films, Jackson turned to LOTR as a "big project" to satisfy his filmmaking interests (which Leotta identifies as special effects, fantasy, battles, and unexpected heroes).[740] According to Ian Nathan, Jackson has talked of having the trilogy mapped out in his head during production, shaped by an awareness of the existing Tolkien fan base's expectations of an adaptation, and maintaining narrative clarity.[741] Jackson's vision foregrounded the idea of 'realistic fantasy', following Tolkien's balance of familiar and unfamiliar, for example, by using historical civilisations to inspire Middle-earth's visual appearance (architecture, costumes, set designs).[742] Nathan describes the constant pre-production media speculation about whether a LOTR adaptation was impossible, with its complicated plot and seemingly endless characters and locations.[743] Jackson, alongside fellow writers Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, drafted the script multiple times, trying to maintain fidelity to the novel (for the existing fans) as a marketing strategy, according to Leotta, and meet the demands of cinephiles and non-readers.[744] As Leotta notes, alterations to the novel

[738] Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 83.
[739] Ian Nathan provides useful context for Jackson's early history with Tolkien. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 18.
[740] Alfio Leotta, *Peter Jackson* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2016), p. 3-4.
[741] Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 292+316. Alfio Leotta, *Peter Jackson*, p. 210.
[742] Jackson also took considerable inspiration from famed Tolkien illustrators John Howe and Alan Lee, who provided the trilogy's artwork. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 117+248-249.
[743] Ibid, p. 17.
[744] Alfio Leotta, *Peter Jackson*, p. 210.

were inevitable: characters were cut, combined, or enhanced, and the three narrative strands were interwoven rather than separated.[745] Above all, Jackson wanted the three films to stand as a single unit, honouring Tolkien's conception of LOTR as a single story.[746]

Following fourteen months of principal photography, the cast and crew talked about their amazing filming experience, including incredible costumes, sword-fighting preparation, lifelong friendships, remote locations, injuries, and Jackson's exhausting schedule, directing multiple units simultaneously across New Zealand.[747] Jackson's ability to juggle his responsibilities over many years, including producing the Extended Editions, is lauded as a great personal achievement. Howard Shore's scores for *LOTR* have been similarly mythologised, while to a lesser extent. As Nathan claims, Shore was Fran Walsh's first and only choice after compiling a temp track comprised entirely of his existing work.[748] Shore thoroughly researched before and during the compositional process: he constantly consulted the novel, visited the cast, crew, and sets in New Zealand, and explored musics from around the world.[749] By the end of the process (including stints for the Extended Editions), Doug Adams records that Shore had composed, orchestrated, conducted, and produced nearly twelve hours of music for a 230-strong ensemble (including multiple choirs) with over 90 leitmotifs.[750]

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[745] Ibid.

[746] This partly led to the unusual decision to film the whole trilogy simultaneously. Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers: The Extended Edition*, commentary with the director and writers, New Line Cinema (2003), accessed 03/02/2019.

[747] For detail on the filming process and cast and crew reminiscences, Ian Nathan's work is unparalleled: Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p.192-228.

[748] Ibid, p. 434-435.

[749] Ian Nathan is one of the few critics that gives this kind of behind-the-scenes information on the scoring process. Ibid, p. 436-440.

[750] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films* (Van Nuys: Carpentier, 2010), p. 383. Paul Chihara, "Howard Shore: A Conversation with Paul Chihara" *Music and the Moving Image*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2008), p. 11-12. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 445

Seventeen Academy Awards (including three for Shore's score) and nearly $3 billion at the box office cemented *LOTR* as 'one of the most important and revolutionary film projects in the history of cinema', with Jackson as the unshakeable captain at the helm.[751] Romanticising the filming process, Jackson and New Line (the production company) framed *LOTR* as a once-in-a-lifetime event, where the "little man" triumphed over the dominant power (Hollywood). Following initial release, Shore fashioned the score into a symphony, which has since toured the world.[752] Classic FM has named *LOTR* as the UK's favourite film score for six years running; the standard edition collection remains on the classical chart (including streaming) and has been certified Gold or Platinum in multiple countries.[753] *LOTR* also set 'a new benchmark' for the new DVD format and its commercial possibilities: Jackson re-released *LOTR* in a series of "Extended Editions" (EE), which added up to fifty-one minutes of footage per film.[754] Similarly, Shore's scores were re-released with extra music for each film, as Kristin Thompson notes.[755] The EE sales figures show their popularity: many fans consider them the definitive versions for including material cut from the theatrical versions, which Jackson suggests that 'more casual viewers' should stick to.[756] This tactic has become a modern franchise mainstay – the gradual release of new content

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[751] "*The Lord of the Rings* (film series)" Wikipedia. Alfio Leotta, *Peter Jackson*, p. 205.
[752] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 382-3.
[753] Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 447. Wikipedia, "Music of *The Lord of the Rings* film series" Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_The_Lord_of_the_Rings_film_series, accessed 09/09/2018.
[754] Craig Hight, "Making-of Documentaries on DVD: The Lord of the Rings Trilogy and Special Editions" *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 56 (2005), p.5- 6. Alfio Leotta, *Peter Jackson*, p. 217.
[755] Jennifer Nelson, *Classic FM Saturday Night at the Movies: The extraordinary partnerships behind cinema's greatest scores* (London: Elliott and Thompson Limited, 2018), p. 154. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 447. Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise:* The Lord of the Rings *and Modern Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 214.
[756] Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*, p. 214. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 297. Sue Turnbull, "Understanding Disappointment: The Australian Book Lovers and Adaptation" in eds. Martin Baker and Ernest Mathijs, *Watching The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 107.

to expand the franchise world and potential income – and demonstrates modern cinema's close dynamic between commerce and the epic, a relationship that would require an entire thesis to fully unpick.[757] My use of the EEs in this chapter is based on this fan reception, the fact that New Line undoubtedly saw the financial benefits of releasing extra material, and, the easier cross-referencing enabled by the editing and track order of the EE scores, which mirror the films closely. Although some music on the EE CDs does not feature in the films, it will not be excluded from discussion, as many fans listen to the score independently of the film.[758] In fact, separating music from film encourages questions around how dependent the score is on the film for its interactions with the epic meta-category.

Yet, for all their success, *LOTR*, Jackson, and Shore are not without criticism. Typically, fans of the novel criticised the filmmakers' omissions or under-development of material. A recent reception study for *Return* amongst Australian viewers, who identified as fans of the novel, revealed disappointment in the treatment of Faramir (14% of respondents) and his relationship with Éowyn (8%), Saruman's absence in the theatrical version (13%), and no Scouring of the Shire (13%), for instance.[759] Professional critics were more displeased with filmmaking choices and techniques. Nev Pierce said that the films tried to cover too much, although David Hunter argues that the expert pacing justifies the films' running times.[760] Peter Travers bemoans the

[757] For instance, according to *Box Office Mojo*, the release of the *Fellowship* EE in 2004 in only 19 markets added nearly $3m to the box office takings, which does not include DVD or merchandise sales figures. "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)" *Box Office Mojo*, available at https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt0120737/?ref_=bo_se_r_2, accessed 13/12/2020.
[758] This is supported by the score's near-constant presence in various classical music charts (including streaming services) and the attention the score has received in a wealth of multi-media amateur analyses.
[759] Sue Turnbull, "Understanding Disappointment: The Australian Book Lovers and Adaptation", p. 106.
[760] Nev Pierce, "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, 2001" BBC Films, 11th December 2001, http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2001/12/11/lord_of_the_rings_fellowship_of_the_ring_2001_review.shtml

'tackiness' of Lothlórien's 'overlit' quality in *Fellowship*; Jackson's experience in horror shows in his superior portrayal of evil and darkness.[761] Meanwhile, Return's multiple endings did not translate well to film for Sean Saulsbury.[762] Beyond technical critiques, criticisms of film and novel are very similar. For instance, Travers and Elvis Mitchell despair at the sidelining of female characters, which was not pacified by the filmmakers' expansion of the Aragorn-Arwen romance plot.[763] Despite largely positive reviews, Jackson's attempt to balance textual fidelity and cinematic conventions was never going to please everybody.[764]

Besides closely following Tolkien's text, Shore has only mentioned Wagner as a key influence in an interview with Paul Chihara.[765] Like Wagner's conception of the *Ring*, Shore viewed *LOTR* as one film in three acts, with the score guiding the listener, saturating the film with music.[766] Inspired by Wagnerian music drama, Shore's leitmotif

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, accessed 10/04/2019. David Hunter, "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, 2001" *Hollywood Reporter*, 4th December 2001, published online 19/12/2016, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/lord-rings-fellowship-ring-2001-review-950526, accessed 10/04/2019

[761] Peter Travers, "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring" *Rolling Stone*, 19th December 2001, https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-reviews/the-lord-of-the-rings-the-fellowship-of-the-ring-251078/, accessed 10/04/2019.

[762] Sean Saulsbury, "The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King" *Box Office Mojo*, 17th December 2003, https://www.boxofficemojo.com/reviews/?id=returnoftheking.htm, accessed online 11/04/2019.

[763] Peter Bradshaw, "The Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring" *The Guardian*, 14th December 2001, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2001/dec/14/lordoftherings1, accessed 10/04/2019. Elvis Mitchell, "Soldiering on in Epic Pursuit of Purity" *The New York Times*, 18th December 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/18/movies/film-review-soldiering-on-in-epic-pursuit-of-purity.html, accessed online 11/04/2019. Peter Travers, "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring" *Rolling Stone*.

[764] The trilogy's three instalments have approval ratings of 91%, 95% and 93% on *Rotten Tomatoes,* based on 228, 250, and 271 professional reviews respectively. "Lord of the Rings" *Rotten Tomatoes*, available at https://www.rottentomatoes.com/franchise/lord_of_the_rings/, accessed 10/04/2019.

[765] Paul Chihara, "Howard Shore: A Conversation with Paul Chihara", p. 14.

[766] Tolkien famously disliked comparisons between his novel and Wagner's *Ring,* stating that 'both rings were round, and there the resemblance ceased', but the comparison has nonetheless persisted. On Tolkien, Wagner, and Shore, see: Judith Bernanke, "Howard Shore's ring cycle: the film score and operatic strategy" in eds. Harriet Margolis, Sean Cubitt, Barry King and Thierry Jutel, *Studying the event film:* The Lord of the Rings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 176. Paul Chihara, "Howard Shore: A Conversation with Paul Chihara", p. 13. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 445. Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: a biography*, p. 202.

collection uses "clusters" of motifs for Middle-earth's regions, races, and narrative devices or objects (like the Ring).[767] As Adams notes, Shore even alludes to *Götterdämmerung* in *Return*'s end credits, but otherwise refrains from overt references.[768] However, Shore's score is undoubtedly indebted to post-Wagnerian developments. As will be discussed in greater detail below, Shore uses musical styles, techniques, references, or instruments from both post-Wagnerian Western art music and other world cultures, including the twelve-tone technique, indeterminacy, and allusions to Celtic, Indian, and African styles. Although he may not have articulated it himself, Shore's music also betrays the influence of figures such as Richard Strauss and Stravinsky.

The *LOTR* Symphony was an unanticipated by-product of Shore's score, putting the film's music into a concert hall setting and demonstrating the commercial potential of cinematic repertoires. In many ways, the *LOTR* score and symphony mirror Vaughan Williams's *Scott* and *Sinfonia Antartica*: largely the same musical material in two different media and arrangements. Here, I am focusing on Shore's score to provide a counterpart to approaching *Sinfonia Antartica* from the symphonic side. This choice provides a means for comparison (with slightly different methodological approaches and prominent points of discussion) and demonstrates the increasing importance of film for the epic meta-category by the turn of the twenty-first century. Arguably,

[767] Shore's leitmotif development and usage has not been examined in any great depth yet, but broadly, Shore's strategy mirrors Wagner's more mature presentations of the technique. Beyond marking on-screen appearances of characters/realms/objects, Shore's leitmotifs provide deeper insight into underlying themes and powers. A notable example is use of *"The Evil of the Ring"* leitmotif during the scene at Galadriel's mirror, which shows that Galadriel is being tempted by the power of the Ring. Paul Chihara, "Howard Shore: A Conversation with Paul Chihara", p. 10.

[768] Doug Adams, "The Music of The Lord of the Rings Films – Part III: The Return of the King – The Annotated Score" CD booklet for *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King – The Complete Recordings*, available at https://web.archive.org/web/20080916055404/http://www.lordoftherings-soundtrack.com/rotk_annotated_score.pdf, accessed 25/09/2018, p. 32.

focusing on a non-symphonic orchestral work enables consideration of how music can interact with the meta-category outside of symphonic boundaries and does not unintentionally tie epic to symphonic practices. Although this is not an audio-visual analysis of *LOTR*, the films' depiction of Tolkien's story are essential for understanding the ways in which Shore's score interacts with the epic meta-category, whether in its score form or rearranged into a symphony. The *LOTR* Symphony would undoubtedly provide further insight into the complex relationships between epic, film, and music, but the contrast between Shore's and Vaughan Williams's works here are of particular interest.

Shore's *LOTR* thus functions as one manifestation of a highly complex imaginary world that has collected, absorbed, and reinterpreted a wealth of pre-existing referential material. Discussion around the interactions between Shore's *LOTR* and the epic meta-category will focus on three key themes: the complex relationship between Shore's score and the exotic Other, integral to a sense of epic scope that combines the fantastic and the realistic; Shore's meditation on gender and heroism, providing a reimagining of the epic hero as multiple heroes, and a reading of Éowyn as a hero figure; and finally, the importance of New Zealand's landscape in terms of scale, scope, the sublime, and as a focal point in *LOTR*'s commercial impact.

The fantastic, the exotic, and the Other

Jackson's *LOTR* has reinvigorated conversations around Tolkien's racialised presentation of good and evil.[769] Good and evil in Middle-earth are explicitly divided

[769] As examples of this critical discussion, see: Sue Kim, "Beyond Black and White: Race and Postmodernism in The Lord of the Rings Films", p. 875. Helen Young, "Diversity and Difference:

around a Self-Other duality, with peripheral exceptions or ambiguities. Race and racial conflict – both past and present – actively shape the quests driving *LOTR*'s narrative, which expands Middle-earth's epic longevity and scope by drawing parallels to the Primary World. Visually, Jackson problematically depicts Middle-earth's evil forces as geographically Eastern, aesthetically non-Western (with dark skin colours, "exotic" war paint, Caribbean- and Pacific Island-inspired jewellery and hairstyles), and "unnatural" (disfigurements, references to savagery, like armour featuring bones, and animalistic or uncivilised behaviour such as cannibalism). Good characters are visually Western and Caucasian, with costumes inspired by Western cultures (the Anglo-Saxons, for example, for Rohan), and adopt a civilised behavioural code. Jackson's visual cues for good 'position whiteness as a universal ideal' and evil as the Other, but the distinction is not sharply defined.[770] As Sean Redmond argues, formerly "good" Saruman retains his whiteness (skin/hair colour and clothing) throughout the trilogy.[771] Other white characters are morally ambiguous: Galadriel becomes an ally to the Fellowship, while Denethor is neither ally nor outright enemy. Jackson's conflation of evil with blackness or darkness reflects its occurrences in Middle-earth's natural elements as well as Tolkien's text.[772] Tolkien and Jackson's use of race and the exotic Other to expand Middle-earth's scope is not always satisfactory.[773] Like Jackson, Shore's score tends to

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Cosmopolitanism and "The Lord of the Rings"", p. 351. Dimitra Fimi, "Was Tolkien really racist?" *The Conversation*, published 06/12/2018, available at https://theconversation.com/was-tolkien-really-racist-108227, accessed 25/06/2019.

[770] Sean Redmond, "The whiteness of *Rings*", p. 91.

[771] Ibid, p. 92.

[772] For instance, as Helen Young notes, the evil realm of Mordor is geographically Eastern, and the Orcs march under shadow because they fear sunlight. Helen Young, "Diversity and Difference: Cosmopolitanism and "The Lord of the Rings"", p. 353-354.

[773] Many of Jackson's attempts to show racial diversity and scope are crude or politically transparent, rather than enhancing the narrative. An obvious example is the romantic sub-plot between the Dwarf Kili and the Elf Tauriel (an entirely new character) in Jackson's later *Hobbit* trilogy: their relationship seems to exist purely to satisfy a "tick box" for showing positive interracial interaction. Peter Travers, "The Hobbit: Desolation of Smaug" *Rolling Stone*, published 12/12/2013, available at https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-reviews/the-Hobbit-the-desolation-of-smaug-101640/,

characterise Middle-earth's evil forces through a culturally diverse, yet racially profiled musical palette, but it contains ambiguity and explicitly celebrates inter-racial cooperation.

Shore most explicitly distinguishes between Middle-earth's races and realms by incorporating (typically) non-orchestral instruments.[774] Figure 16 maps the geographical origins of Shore's instrument choices and their relation to Middle-earth's races and realms:

accessed 05/01/2021. Shelia O'Malley, "The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug" *RogerEbert.com*, published 13/12/2013, available at https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-Hobbit-the-desolation-of-smaug-2013, accessed 05/01/2021.

[774] Lists of instruments related to the particular realms of Middle-earth are included in Doug Adams's liner notes for the trilogy's complete recordings. For example, for *Fellowship*: Doug Adams, "The Music of The Lord of the Rings Films – Part I: The Fellowship of the Ring – The Annotated Score" CD booklet for *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring – The Complete Recordings*, available at http://www.lordoftherings-soundtrack.com/fotr_annotated_score_2.pdf, accessed 14/09/2018, p. 24-26.



Figure 16: A map showing the origins of the instruments used to represent the realms and characters of Middle-earth

Key:

S – the Shire	G – Gondor	M – Mordor	R – Rohan	L – Lothlórien
I – Isengard	O – Gollum	E – the Easterlings	T – the Ents	A – the Army of the Dead

The good-evil mapping of instruments onto the West-East binary does not fit as neatly as criticisms of Tolkien's and Jackson's alleged racism suggest, avoiding a straightforward compass-like strategy. Mordor's instruments, for example, are not found in the south-east corner of the world, nor does Rohan's instrumental palette derive from roughly the map's centre. Many instrumental choices reflect Tolkien's medieval sources of inspiration for Middle-earth's territories.[775] For those realms that have no corresponding medieval society (especially ones linked with evil), their associated timbres carry more ideological weight. The map does suggest some more localised depictions of exotic ideology: Mordor's instruments, for example, reflect the narrative of "barbarous" North Africa.[776] Choices for other locales also rely on exotic notions of particular cultures, such as Celtic and Nordic colours deemed "different enough" from Western art music to represent the Shire and Rohan respectively. As the instruments associated with both "good" and "evil" realms equally rely on exoticised views, it is not unreasonable to argue that Middle-earth as a whole is musically positioned as the exotic Other to Earth's Self (represented by the symphony orchestra). On the one hand, this positioning reflects Middle-earth's status as a Secondary World, cultivating necessary space between narrative and audience to develop Middle-earth's sense of history and epic distance. On the other, Middle-earth as the exotic Other frames the legendarium in a problematic "primitive" light. Shore's orchestration and timbre choices also reflect Middle-earth's internal Self-Other

[775] Examples of scholarship that comment on the medieval inspiration behind Middle-earth's realms include: Stuart Lee and Elizabeth Solopova, *The Keys of Middle-earth*; Paul Battles, "What is 'Middle-Earth'? Origins, Evolution, and Mythic Function" in ed. Graham Johnson, *Constructing nations, reconstructing myth: essays in honour of T.A. Shippey* (Turnhout: Brepois Publishers, 2007).
[776] For the idea of 'barbarous' North Africa, see: A. Richardson, "Exoticism" in ed. Roland Greene, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), available online at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2460/view/10.1093/acref/9780190681173.001.0001/acref-9780190681173-e-0418?rskey=5mOgMx&result=1, accessed 13/12/2020.

relations. Non-orchestral instruments from Western Europe are used exclusively for the unambiguously "good" Shire, Gondor, and Rohan. Eastern European, African, and Asian instruments depict the unmistakeably evil (Isengard, Mordor, the Easterlings) and morally ambiguous (Lothlórien, the Ents, the Army of the Dead, Gollum), which complicates the binary between Western Europe as "good" and the rest of the world as an "evil" Other.

Gollum presents a complicated, ambiguous example: his personality and morality are split between his previous Hobbit identity (Sméagol) and his "evil" Gollum side, which is reflected in his skin's greyish hue. Visually, Jackson's Gollum evokes the tradition of the (self-)ostracised, humanoid creature, akin to Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which may be considered a crude depiction of colonial-era ideas of mixed race offspring as not "proper" humans.[777] However, Gollum has been mistreated (by the Ring) and thus acts in his own self-interest, regardless of morality. Jackson heightens Gollum's Caliban-esque physicality – his body language, tendency to talk to himself, and warped, degenerated physique – to exaggerate his otherness and lack of alignment with either West or East. Gollum's signature cimbalom timbre suggests his capacity for "good", originating from Eastern Europe, a region simultaneously European and "Other" to the more politically dominant West. As the Western Celtic idiom characterises the Shire, geographically positioning Gollum's sound close to Hobbits echoes Sméagol's continued presence, yet Eastern Europe's "Other" status evokes Gollum's "dangerous" side. The cimbalom is particularly associated with the leitmotif *"The Menace of Gollum"*, while *"The Pity of Gollum"* is timbrally more

[777] Past and present difficulties around the positioning of mixed race in relation to "black", "white", and other racial identifiers are explored in great depth by: Naomi Zack, "How Mixed Race Is Not Constructed: US Identities and Perspectives" in ed. Naomi Zack, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 380-389.

Westernised. Traversing the West-East divide through Gollum highlights that neither good nor evil is absolute.

The Ents offer another version of ambiguity: their potential threat to "good" lacks specific geographical associations, as their characteristic instruments and timbres developed simultaneously in multiple locations or have ambiguous histories. For instance, the marimba, probably the Ents' most recognisable instrument, according to Doug Adams, has roots in both Africa and Central America.[778] As the Ents are Middle-earth's omnipresent guardians, their geographical rootlessness suggests mobility and universality, which, to a certain extent, removes the Ents from the racial coding of the human(oid) races. Instead, the race's characterisation through primarily wooden instruments forges a link between materiality and sound: the Ents's music replicates their physicality, whereas other races' musics replicate their behaviours. The Ents' defining trait is their connection to and guardianship of nature, which is best represented by timbres produced by natural materials. Other races that show a musical link between character traits and materiality include the Orcs and Uruk-hai (metal-based instruments and timbres reflecting their armour and roles in modern industry), but the more "human" races (as opposed to humanoid) lack any overt connection. Materiality thus functions as a way of marking *LOTR*'s natural-unnatural and nature-industry binaries, racialising and moralising naturally and industrially derived materials and their associated timbres.

[778] "The birth of the marimba" Yamaha Musical Instrument Guide, accessed at https://www.yamaha.com/en/musical_instrument_guide/marimba/structure/, accessed on 14/03/2019. Doug Adams, "The Music of The Lord of the Rings Films – Part II: The Two Towers – The Annotated Score" CD booklet for *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers – The Complete Recordings*, available at https://web.archive.org/web/20070224170815/http://www.lordoftherings-soundtrack.com/ttt_annotated_score.pdf, accessed 20/09/2018, p. 41.

Regardless of moral alignment, almost all of Middle-earth's cultures include non-orchestral instrumental colours. Assuming that the symphony orchestra represents the Primary World, *LOTR*'s use of folk or non-Western instruments suggest a broader power dynamic. As Ralph Locke has argued, Western art music has a long history of augmenting the symphony orchestra with additional "exotic" instruments, and many standard orchestral instruments have been similarly labelled (including the oboe).[779] So, Shore's orchestration uses unfamiliar colours (for Western viewers) to distance the score's musical landscape from Western Europe, and combines musical traditions to frame the score as stylistically rootless. The standard symphony orchestra (the dominant timbral force) becomes a frame of reference for the "exotic" instruments, functioning as "home". Nevertheless, the score's timbral and colouristic variety suggests that it represents an entire Secondary World's musical culture, needed to order the vast landscape into distinctive groups for narrative clarity (despite any ideological implications).[780] But, the notion of non-orchestral instruments as "not of this world" is steeped in imperialist ideology. Locating non-orchestral instruments in a distinct, fantastical space replicates Primary World racial Othering, creating timbral separation between standard orchestral and "exotic" instrumental groups. This distance is arguably emphasised by Middle-earth's quasi-medieval aesthetic, which suggests the presence of the Primary World's contemporary racial tensions since the Secondary World's distant past (following Tolkien's idea of Middle-earth's history as our own). Some non-orchestral instruments are used for their archetypally "ancient"

[779] Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Janet K. Page, Geoffrey Burgess, Bruce Haynes and Michael Finkelman, "Oboe" Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, available at http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2709/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040450?rskey=18MAKF&result=1, accessed 29/03/2019.

[780] The claim that the symphony orchestra dominates is based on the use of non-orchestral instruments in specific circumstances, while the orchestra is the accompaniment or the primary vehicle throughout.

sound (such as the wooden flute heard during Faramir's futile attempt to reclaim Osgiliath in *Return*). Shore's reliance on the associative content of different timbres to present Middle-earth's diverse cultures in racial, spatial, and historical terms represents cultural mapping as a form of control. The audience is given little alternative but to interpret Middle-earth's cultures in light of the Primary World locations that inspired their musical idiom. In exerting this control, Shore may aid comprehension of a new fantasy world, but it comes with a troubling ideological subtext.

Shore also indicates (racial) difference through Tolkien's invented languages (see Appendix 1 for a summary). The uses of these languages, although occasionally inconsistent, have ideological significance, especially as, according to Adams, the words' sound quality affected Shore's language choices.[781]

As the dialect of the High Elves, Quenya's connotations of superiority are reflected in where the language is sung. Quenya's appearances in Lothlórien mirrors the realm's elevated status for Elves and distinguishing it from the more welcoming Rivendell. Quenya is also heard in Isengard, but is unrelated to Saruman's evil activities. Accompanying Gandalf, imprisoned atop Orthanc, sending a message via a moth, the Quenya text is set to the leitmotif *"Nature's Reclamation"* in a brief interlude within Isengard's characteristically industrial sound.[782] This language-leitmotif combination and juxtaposition with Isengard's "evil" timbres frames Nature as the ultimate force of good even amongst evil. Shore explicitly articulates Tolkien's anti-industrial message,

[781] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 4. "Music of *The Lord of the Rings* film series" Wikipedia.
[782] CD reference: *Fellowship*, "The Caverns of Isengard" c. 2:00-2:36.

as the Quenya text is only heard as the shot focuses on Gandalf, and both the wizard and the "good" musical material are spatially elevated above the "evil" below. Shore's association between Nature and Quenya echoes Tolkien's belief that nature contains the greatest beauty, since he modelled Quenya on what he deemed the most beautiful language, Finnish.[783] Built within the trees and visually incorporating numerous natural motifs, Lothlórien's intrinsic connection to Nature also echoes the links between language, beauty, nature, and superiority. The example of Quenya illustrates the hierarchical organisation of Tolkien's languages based on their racial links and contexts, aurally manifesting Middle-earth's power relations and the epic scope of its racial prejudices.[784] Quenya's connection with Nature early in *Fellowship* begins to personify Nature, almost akin to the gods in classical myth. Nature's eventual intervention in the War of the Ring expands the scope of the fantastic and reinforces its status as the ultimate power.

Demonstrating his in-depth knowledge of Middle-earth, Shore creates a textual association between evil and Adûnaic, echoing the language's historical use by the Númenoreans, Men who fell to darkness in a previous Age. This historical association, however, continues the problematic dynamic between evil, the Other, and ideas of beauty. Adûnaic words have a Germanic-inspired harsh, guttural quality with hard

[783] Tolkien's reverence for Finnish, Welsh, and Icelandic suggests a potentially exotic interest in Nordic and Celtic cultures, while his dislike of the harshness of Germanic-based languages may indicate a racially-charged bias against eastern Europe. For more on Tolkien's aesthetic assessments of various languages, see: Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: a biography*, p. 93-94.

[784] The hierarchical organisation of languages encourages both characters and audiences to have exotic views of Middle-earth's cultures. The Elves, for example, speak the most in their own language(s) on-screen (with subtitles) for two notable reasons. Firstly, the Elvish languages, when spoken by non-Elves, are spoken only by "elite" characters (Aragorn, Gandalf, Sauron), which suggests that these languages form a barrier for conversations of great importance or secrecy. Secondly, the romantic scenes between Aragorn and Arwen are mostly written in Elvish to complement these intimate moments. By using subtitles, the audience is invited into the exclusive club that can understand the language, which encourages the view that races/characters unable to speak Elvis are "inferior".

vowels; evil is linguistically and aurally "ugly", following colonial-era associations between ugliness and the Other.[785] When the language accompanies the Balrog, associations between evil, race, and ugliness are particularly problematic.[786] Ralph P. Locke argues that the mix of Polynesian singers, Maori *haka*-style chanting, and Jackson's alleged request for the sound of a 'Welsh miners' chorus' creates an exotic flavour that cannot be localised and instead appears simply fantastical.[787] Regardless of place of origin, the exotically-charged chanting style (which highlights Adûnaic's harsh sound), accented "stabs", emphasis on the bass register, and brass clusters with dramatic swells frame the Balrog as the evil Other. The chorus's depiction of threat is perpetuated by the array of deep-sounding drums and the unpredictable accents of the gradually accumulating brass chord clusters. Although de-localised, the whole ensemble and language choice depict the presence of a powerful evil. De-localising the exotic presents evil's constancy and universality, regardless of time or place. Middle-earth's realistic engagement with Primary World battles frame the War of the Ring as part of the long tradition of "good versus evil", evoking the epic's characteristic sense of history and longevity.

When English is used for sung texts, its significance differs from that of the invented languages. Besides the end-credits songs, every English-texted song is diegetic, for individuals or small groups, and either a drinking song or set in the Shire. These attributes evoke an idealised rural "merrie England", where singing frequently accompanies social gatherings or journeys. Connecting English and the Shire exploits

[785] As Sean Redmond explores, the Elvish characters and culture are an idealised version of Western standards of beauty, as are, to a lesser extent, the Hobbits and Shire. Their respective languages aurally manifest this idealisation. Sean Redmond, "The whiteness of *Rings*", p. 92-95.
[786] CD reference: *Fellowship*, "Khazad-Dûm" c. 00:00-03:16.
[787] Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*, p. 303.

the viewer's (almost) guaranteed greater familiarity with the sounds of English than Tolkien's invented languages, fashioning the Shire's English-speaking culture into the viewer's virtual "home". English functions as Middle-earth's "common tongue", so that language choice demonstrates the Hobbits' modesty and disinterest in power compared to the other races. Shore's use of English idealises the Hobbits and the Shire, as Patricia Spacks observes, which presents a troubling ideological paradox.[788] The Shire landscape and lifestyle is a romanticised 'middle "England"' widely promulgated in the late Victorian-Edwardian era, the height of British imperialism.[789] Tolkien's, Jackson's, and Shore's idyllic Shire with an insular, homogenous, rural society sharply contrasts with the urbanised, multi-cultural, imperialist British Empire of the same era. Thus, Shore's use of English plays a key role in presenting the Shire lifestyle as aspirational, ignoring problematic aspects of British imperialism.[790] *LOTR* is allegedly told from the perspective of the Hobbits, framing Middle-earth's fantastical elements through "familiar" (or Westernised) eyes, so, as Gunnar Urang argues, viewers are guided to adopt that viewpoint.[791] However, this means that viewers also adopt the Hobbits' exoticised views of Middle-earth's places and peoples.[792] Nevertheless, Jackson's "merrie England" Shire suggests a specific (and not particularly distant) time

[788] Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Power and Meaning in *The Lord of the Rings*" in eds. Rose A. Zimbardo and Neil D. Isaacs, *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism*, p. 53. Brian Attebery, *Stories about stories*, p. 41.

[789] Sean Redmond, "The whiteness of *Rings*", p. 95. Abigail E. Ruane and Patrick James, *The International Relations of Middle-earth: Learning from The Lord of the Rings* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2015), p. 178. John C. Hunter, "The Evidence of Things Not Seen: Critical Mythology and "The Lord of the Rings"" *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 29, no. 2, Making Corrections (2006), p. 141. Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, p. 11.

[790] Similarly, Vincent Rone argues that Shore's harmonic palette characterises the Shire as "home" for comparison with other Middle-earth realms. Vincent Rone, "Scoring the Familiar and the Unfamiliar in Howard Shore's The Lord of the Rings" *Music and the Moving Image*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Summer 2018), p. 39-40.

[791] Gunnar Urang, "Tolkien's Fantasy: The Phenomenology of Hope" in ed. Mark R. Hillegas, *Shadows of Imagination: The Fantasies of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), p. 102.

[792] The Hobbits all experience Middle-earth for the first time in LOTR, so each realm represents a different Other.

and place. Similarly, the grounding of the "everyman" hero (Frodo) in an idealised society (that perpetuates imperialist assumptions of Western superiority) subverts the typically elite epic hero attempting to reverse the fortunes of a struggling society. Crucially, Tolkien, Jackson, and Shore all present the Shire ideal as unsustainable, which exposes epic's idealistic tendencies and suggests that the quest's results are not wholly positive. Although absent from the films, even the Shire is adversely affected by the War of the Ring.

Alongside references to non-Western musics, Shore uses twentieth-century art music techniques to depict evil and its centres, Isengard and Mordor.[793] Modernist techniques or colours are particularly common in science-fiction film scores to signify strangeness and (supernatural) difference, for which there is historical precedence.[794] According to Kathleen Kuiper, modernism echoed and was shaped by the pessimism, fear, and turmoil of the *fin de siècle* and interwar period, emphasising its difference to the excesses of Romanticism, so Shore's timbral and orchestration choices mirror this original aesthetic.[795] Good and evil are musically polarised, using generic Romantic and modernist indicators respectively to echo Tolkien's 'anti-modern values', in Leotta's

[793] To clarify "twentietch-century art" or "modernist" music/techniques here refers to the conflation of diverse features from a range of musical styles developed or prominent within the twentieth century, including expressionism, serialism, and indeterminacy. Shore's score is steeped in a very nostalgic version of late Romanticism, which makes certain features or tendencies seem oppositional. However, summarising these features as "modernist" is not meant to indicate that this distinctly non-Romantic idiom evokes the modernist aesthetic as understood in musicological circles. Instead, I argue that Shore conflates features from a range of twentieth-century idioms into a generic sense of "modernity" (often relying heavily on mere dissonance), marked by its difference to the nostalgic Romanticism elsewhere. Hence, "modernist" is not here used in a musicological fashion, but rather reflective of the binary that Shore cultivates and the wider scholarly tendency for Tolkien's text to be discussed in terms of traditional values battling against modernity.

[794] An early proponent of this association was Bernard Hermann, who famously employed the theremin for *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951).

[795] Kathleen Kuiper, "Modernism" Britannica Academic, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4663/levels/collegiate/article/Modernism/474688, accessed 14/04/2019.

words.[796] Romanticism's highly nostalgic alignment with "good" plays into larger-scale ideas of familiarity. Romanticism is highly likely to be more familiar to audiences, so the "evil" modernist idiom is appropriately more unfamiliar (and unnatural). Within a medieval-inspired Middle-earth, aligning evil with modernity also suggests the longevity of modernisation's and industrialisation's threat. As most of the score is entrenched in romanticism, the occasional modernist cue encourages audiences to associate the pre-modern aesthetic with "good" and thus frame good and evil within the epic's traditional struggle.

The music that Shore uses with the Black Riders provides a useful example of how the score veers away from its nostalgic Romantic aesthetic to depict forces of evil, as showcased by the track "The Nazgûl" (a description is given in Appendix 2).
The seemingly unpredictable and violent dynamic and textural changes portray the Black Riders as formidable adversaries. While not all markedly "modernist", the Black Rider sound shares its character with key works or styles from that era. For instance, the use of ostinato, ritualistic rhythms, and brass stabs evokes Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* or *The Firebird*. Shore's references to these idioms draws on their controversial historical reception to demonstrate an evil nature, again evoking the problematic association of evil with ugliness, which is recognised by Richard Gunderman.[797] Besides merely reflecting "evil", the Black Rider sound also depicts the power that they exert. Most of the score thus far has been rooted in the Shire idiom, so the Black Riders' threatening sound boldly declares evil's presence and power, all scored with a strong

[796] Sean Astin with Joe Layden, *There and Back Again: An Actor's Tale – A Behind-The-Scenes Look At The Lord of the Rings* (London: Virgin Books Ltd., 2004), p. 186. Sue Kim, "Beyond Black and White: Race and Postmodernism in The Lord of the Rings Films", p. 881. Alfio Leotta, *Touring the Screen*, p. 174.
[797] Richard Gunderman, "Tolkien and the machine" *The Conversation*, published 06/01/2015, available at https://theconversation.com/tolkien-and-the-machine-35826, accessed 25/06/2019.

dynamic, unrelenting trombone ostinato, substantial chorus, and thick texture, which collectively suggest a large, strong, unstoppable force.[798] In Middle-earth, the narrative is driven by evil's (the Other's) attempts to dominate good (the Self). Middle-earth's reversal of colonial race relations illustrates why it is misleading to assume that *LOTR* replicates Primary World racial power dynamics based on visual cues alone. Behavioural attributes are equally important: the Orcs and Uruk-hai, for example, may exhibit "savage" behaviours, but their music demonstrates that these characters are also frightening for the power that they exert. The threat is real, serious, and articulated by modernism's controversial sounds, which pose a challenge to the Romantic idiom's comfortable, nostalgic traditions and tropes. Epic's traditional battle between good and evil takes on another dimension as a conflict between nostalgic Romanticism and modernist destabilisation of that familiar idiom.

The music of evil also uses indeterminacy, as heard in Frodo's encounter with Shelob in *Return* (see Appendix 2 for more details).[799] The contrast between the Shelob-related material and that relating to Frodo's thoughts during this scene of Sam and Galadriel is stark and reinforces that the spider is the source of Frodo's panic, even when unseen. Although the music reflects Frodo's perspective, Shelob's modernist-inspired musical palette before even appearing onscreen depicts the spider's inherent evil, relying upon the audience's familiarity with the connection between the modernist aesthetic and evil. Shelob is musically distanced from the audience, with her "ugly" sound reflecting her Other status as a universally threatening, monstrous creature. While filling the archetypal role of the epic's monster, Shelob's survival subverts the monstrous

[798] CD reference: *Fellowship*, "The Nazgûl" c. 00:58-01:15.
[799] CD reference: *Return*, "Shelob's Lair".

female's normative ending. Shore's score, however, undeniably reinforces Shelob's grotesque nature, power, and ability to terrify, reflecting Tolkien's anti-modernity message. The triumph of good over evil in *LOTR* represents the triumph of traditional ideals over modern sensibilities; the archetypal epic element conquers the modern character.

However, an overly simplistic Self-Other model ignores the central plot point (according to Helen Young) of overcoming racial animosity to defeat a greater, common evil.[800] This view is supported by the trilogy's presentation of the *"Fellowship Theme"*.



Figure 17: the "Fellowship Theme".

Among Shore's most-discussed leitmotifs, the *"Fellowship Theme"* is based around a small cell musically manifesting "there and back again". The cell develops through arch-shape scalar patterns, with militaristic rhythms and a triadic, modal harmonic grounding. The full theme combines elements linked with the races represented in the Fellowship: simple melodic shapes (Hobbits), modal harmonies (Elves), militaristic rhythms (Men), and prominent brass colours (Dwarves) – only Gandalf is absent musically, because he lacks a fixed locale and is 'a facilitator' as an Istari.[801] Shore has

[800] Helen Young, "Diversity and Difference: Cosmopolitanism and "The Lord of the Rings"", p. 352.
[801] Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 450.

detailed his deliberate development of the theme to mirror the Fellowship's fortunes: a fragment accompanies Frodo and Sam beginning their journey to Rivendell, which expands as the Fellowship grows; when the Fellowship is officially formed and named, the theme reaches its complete form; once the group splits, the theme fragments again, rarely returning to the majesty of its complete form.[802] This summary, however, glosses over the theme's nuances in shaping racial dynamics within the Fellowship.

We first hear the *"Fellowship Theme"*, in fact, in the Shire, a scene added for the *Fellowship* EE. Following Bilbo's monologue about Hobbits, a shortened version of the leitmotif accompanies the appearance of the film's title, associating the theme with the Fellowship and hinting at Frodo's destiny.[803] The theme is scored simply for solo French horn and chordal string accompaniment, before a short pause to re-establish Shire material. An unconfident rendition, the gentle orchestration and relaxed tempo reflects the Hobbits' characterisation as quiet and reluctant to be involved with quests, despite their inclusion in the Fellowship. The pause further emphasises the Hobbits' reluctance, suggesting that the score cannot yet musically link the heroic Fellowship and quiet, home-centred Hobbits. Shore's presentation of the "*Fellowship Theme"* here extends Jackson's introduction to the Hobbits, emphasising comfort, familiarity, and disinterest in adventures.

The next appearance of the *"Fellowship Theme"* is scored similarly.[804] Shore expands the initial motif beyond the opening neighbour-note motif to reflect the Fellowship's growth to five members, while also presenting Aragorn's racial identity. Vincent Rone

[802] Shore quoted in Brian Sibley, *The Lord of the Rings: The Making of the Movie Trilogy* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), p. 182. Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 73.
[803] CD reference: *Fellowship*, "The Shire" c. 00:23-00:53.
[804] [?] CD reference: *Fellowship*, "The Nazgûl" c. 02:15-02:44.

has argued that Men use battle as a form of self-determination and historical connection, which is signified in this early version of the *"Fellowship Theme"* by militaristic allusions, like a fuller brass texture, march-like tempo, constant metre, and more *staccato* dotted rhythms.[805] With Aragorn leading, the musical style of Men becomes more prominent, while foreshadowing the Fellowship's participation in the battle against evil.

Shore explicitly connects the *"Fellowship Theme"* with the Fellowship when the group is officially formed and named at the Council of Elrond, a scene which displays racial tensions.[806] As Gimli starts an argument by saying that he would never see the Ring 'in the hands of an Elf!', the *"The Evil of the Ring"* leitmotif and Sauron's voice overpower the dialogue.[807] The "*Evil*" leitmotif coincides with the mention of race, which shows that even "good" characters maintain "evil" racial prejudices. Once Frodo volunteers to take the Ring, the "*Fellowship Theme"* begins, at first with a slow version of the neighbour-note motif, then a full thematic statement at a more familiar tempo. Frodo's willingness to sacrifice himself incentivises the Fellowship to put aside racial prejudices. This confident, climactic, first full statement thus marks the first triumph for "good": the members conquer their racial prejudices to unite against a common evil, accepting the call to adventure.

[805] Vincent Rone, "Scoring the Familiar and the Unfamiliar in Howard Shore's The Lord of the Rings", p. 45.
[806] CD reference: *Fellowship*: "The Great Eye" c. 02:47-05:27.
[807] Notably, Sauron uses Black Speech in this scene: Mordor's evil (in the form of racial divides and prejudices) can spread aurally. Jackson is arguably emphasising the more modern mental battle of "good" individuals to overcome their "evil" prejudices. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring: The Extended Edition* (2002) directed by Peter Jackson, New Line Cinema.

After the Fellowship splits, the *"Fellowship Theme"* acts as a reminder of the value of inter-racial cooperation for Frodo's quest. The Black Gate battle in *Return* offers an example, where the theme represents Aragorn's refusal to give up hope.[808] As Aragorn charges, a full chorus and high strings present the most magnificent version of the *"Fellowship Theme"* in *Return*.[809] The chorus's Sindarin text (provided by Doug Adams) replicates Aragorn's promise to Frodo: 'If by my life or death I can protect you, I will. I give you my sword'.[810] The *"Fellowship Theme"* becomes the ultimate statement of camaraderie, the chorus embodying their collective voice of solidarity with Frodo as racial differences are arguably eradicated.[811] The chorus also reflects the idea of epics being stories from and about a particular community or society: this scene marks the battle as a collectively significant historical (or legendary) moment.

Although the *"Fellowship Theme"* binds the "good" races around Frodo's quest, *LOTR*'s racial coding of evil and encounters with the unfamiliar remains prominent. The *"Fellowship Theme"* may incorporate elements of each race's idiom, but these features are not mutually exclusive. Modal harmony, for example, is common for both Men and Elves. Each race's music develops throughout the trilogy: the Hobbits' music, for instance, retains some of its Celtic flavour, but their leitmotifs evolve with their growing maturity and increasing worldly experience.[812] However, the *lack* of strong musical affiliation in the *"Fellowship Theme"* with a single "good" race is key for

[808] CD reference: *Return*, "For Frodo" c. 00:00-00:28. Doug Adams, "The Music of The Lord of the Rings Films – Part III: The Return of the King – The Annotated Score" CD, p. 27.
[809] *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King: The Extended Edition (2004*) directed by Peter Jackson, New Line Cinema.
[810] Doug Adams, "The Music of The Lord of the Rings Films – Part III: The Return of the King – The Annotated Score", p. 39.
[811] The unity shown here is particularly notable as the audience is aware that Middle-earth's "good" communities historically have not been reliable allies for one another, particularly the animosity between the realms of Rohan and Gondor.
[812] Doug Adams has identified various common variations on the Shire material, including the *"Pensive"*, the *"Hymn"*, and the *"Lullaby"* settings. Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 23-30.

depicting interracial cooperation, showing that no single race is superior to the others. As Adams argues, the most prominent aspect of the *"Fellowship Theme"* is its whole-tone "there-and-back-again" opening motif, an interval that has widespread associations with "good", thus unifying several races under a single musical device.[813] The *"Fellowship Theme"* reminds the viewer throughout that victory over Sauron requires all nine members to play their own specific role.

Gender and heroism

Based on a male-dominated novel about patriarchal societies, *LOTR* inevitably focuses on male characters, which Jackson could not have overcome without radically reconfiguring the female characters.[814] In criticism of both novel and film, the hero concept is unsurprisingly tied to particular male characters.

Frodo (and Sam) represents the relatable "everyman" hero. Frodo's extraordinary quality is not typicallly heroic (such as skill in battle), but rather his courage, as David Weber suggests, knowing the quest's likely outcome.[815] Initially volunteering to carry the Ring for his own interests – wanting to maintain his comfortable Shire life – Frodo lacks the epic hero's heightened communal role as, although his understanding of the quest changes, this motivation never changes. At the crucial moment, as Constance Wagner points out, Frodo actually fails to complete his quest: the Ring's eventual

[813] Ibid, p. 82.
[814] As part of a BBC documentary, Humphrey Carpenter discussed how LOTR shows clear influence from Tolkien's own male-dominated environment, with women as distant outsiders. Kirsty Wark (presenter), "Omnibus: J. R. R. Tolkien: Master of Middle-Earth".
[815] David Weber, "Transfigured Sadness: Characterizations of Sadness in *The Lord of the Rings*" in eds. Rose A. Zimbardo and Neil D. Isaacs, *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism*, p. 334-335.

destruction requires Gollum's intervention.[816] Musically, Frodo's (primarily mental) heroism is tied to the Shire idiom, as a reminder of what he is fighting for. As an example, the simple Shire *"Pensive Setting"* accompanying Frodo and Sam at the very end of *Fellowship*, scored for flute and humming children's choir with accompanying harp arpeggios and string chords, reminds audiences of the Hobbits' love of their home.[817] The leitmotif justifies Frodo's decision to break the Fellowship – Sam and the memory of the Shire keep him going. While essential for the quest, Frodo's quiet bravery is not that of an epic hero.

By contrast, Aragorn possesses many extraordinary qualities – skill in battle, long life, bravery, royal lineage – and performs heroic acts 'in the service of society' from a high-status position, but he is plagued by self-doubt, reluctance to assume the throne, and fear of repeating his ancestors' mistakes.[818] Nevertheless, Aragorn's two leitmotifs (*"Strider's Theme"* and *"Aragorn's Theme"*) demonstrate a strong epic hero profile, developing around his personal struggles.[819] *"Strider's Theme"* first appears at Weathertop in *Fellowship*, but not yet fully formed, suggesting Aragorn's potential, as Adams suggests, building as his confidence grows.[820] At Amon Hen, *"Aragorn's Theme"* marks the first time that Aragorn embraces his heroic, leadership role, but Adams observes that the theme falters as Aragorn fails to save Boromir.[821] In *Towers* and *Return*, the perfect fourth, prominent in Aragorn's leitmotifs and Gondor's Fourth Age

[816] Constance G.J. Wagner, "The War Within: Frodo as Sacrificial Hero" in ed. Sarah Wells, *Tolkien 2005: The Ring Goes Ever On Proceedings, Volume One*, p. 341-342. Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Power and Meaning in *The Lord of the Rings*", p. 64.
[817] CD reference: *Fellowship*, "The Road Goes Ever On, Pt. 1" c. 04:56-05:58.
[818] Beatriz Domínguez Ruiz, "The concept of masculinity in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*", p. 292. Brian Sibley, *The Lord of the Rings: The Making of the Movie Trilogy*, p. 154-155.
[819] Strider is one of Aragorn's alternative names. Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 78-79.
[820] Ibid, p. 78.
[821] Ibid, p. 79+195. CD reference: *Fellowship*, "Parth Galen" c. 04:48-05:11.

leitmotif, increasingly accompanies Aragorn's heroic acts, musically linking him to his kingdom and giving his heroic deeds another purpose.[822] As Adams concludes, Aragorn's dual musical characterisation mirrors his transformation into an epic hero by accepting his destiny and responsibility to his people.[823]

Filling the archetypal "mentor" role in LOTR, Jackson's adaptation foregrounds Gandalf's heroic qualities. Although highly active in a military capacity (as a leader and 'martial arts figure'), Gandalf's wisdom, foresight, and understanding of Middle-earth are his most extraordinary qualities.[824] Like Frodo, Gandalf faces his fears (the Balrog) and is willing to sacrifice himself for others, but Gandalf cannot be labelled an epic hero. Almost too perfect, his personal journey lacks struggle, and he is distanced from Middle-earth's "good" communities, as a wizard and servant of Nature. Shore describes Gandalf as 'elusive', lacking spatial ties, and focused on assisting Frodo, so Gandalf lacks a leitmotif while in his Grey form.[825] By contrast, as Adams notes, Gandalf the White's leitmotif reflects his dual responsibilities (*"Gandalf the White"*, with *"In Nature"* and *"In the Fellowship"* variations) in the resistance against Sauron. Introducing these leitmotifs in *Towers* mirrors Gandalf's changed status, with greater authority and power to challenge Sauron and Saruman.[826] But Gandalf rarely has personal moments of triumph – he facilitates these for others who are destined for the tasks – so his leitmotifs do not function as markers of heroism.

[822] Since Aragorn reclaims the Gondorian throne in the Fourth Age, the musical link between king and kingdom foreshadows the former's destiny.
[823] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 79.
[824] Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*, p. 64.
[825] In the later *Hobbit* trilogy, Shore *did* give Gandalf the Grey a leitmotif. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 450.
[826] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 80-81+120.

LOTR's three heroes demonstrate that the epic hero evades a fixed criteria and transcends boundaries of race and age. Each of *LOTR*'s heroes represents part of the epic hero's life – the naïve youth, the middle-aged man at his peak, and the old, wise father-figure – so Shore's scoring of the three heroes echoes a more modern, pluralistic conception of heroism. Aragorn's and Gandalf's leitmotifs follow a journey-like trajectory, but Frodo's musical characterisation reflects his mental states and struggles. However, Shore presents other characters as equally important within the War of the Ring, with Nature often as the "ultimate" expression of heroism. Nature's leitmotifs often feature in scenes displaying heroic acts, such as the Ents attacking Isengard (*Towers*) and the Rohirrim coming to Gondor's aid (*Return*). In this sense, Shore's scoring of heroism reimagines (epic) heroism beyond (but still including) individual characters.

LOTR's female characters offer insight into developments around interactions between women and the hero paradigm. Despite actively enhancing the roles of Arwen, Galadriel, and Éowyn, Jackson's alterations reveal the constraints of demands for fidelity to Tolkien's novel and perceived expectations of twenty-first century audiences (romantic sub-plots, the "powerful" woman figure, "faery"-inspired creatures).[827] Highly idealised, Arwen suffers the most from these restrictions, described by Tolkien as Middle-earth's fairest creature.[828] As Margarita Carretero-González argues, Arwen

[827] Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers: The Extended Edition*, commentary.

[828] One of the more obvious visual signifiers for this is that Arwen often appears with a halo-like light, whether through additional lighting or by stark contrast that makes her skin lighter. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings, Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), p. 254.

seems to exist only as Aragorn's love interest.[829] After her moment of glory in saving Frodo in *Fellowship,* she is limited to persuading Elrond to reforge Narsil and sacrificing her immortality for Frodo.[830] Intriguingly, according to Ian Nathan, Jackson filmed footage of Arwen at the Battle of Helm's Deep, but the filmmakers and actress Liv Tyler ultimately decided that Arwen's strength lay in her patience and belief in Aragorn, which may or may not have been influenced by assumed audience demands.[831] Unsurprisingly, Arwen's musical characterisation revolves around her relationship with Aragorn (they share a leitmotif) and her racial identity (Elvish modal/mediant harmonies, "otherworldly" vocals, and associated leitmotifs).[832]

Galadriel fares little better. An Elvish queen and Ring-bearer, Galadriel wields immense (supernatural) power, but she remains in the narrative's background. Initially morally ambiguous and emotionally detached, she aids the Fellowship after resisting the Ring's temptation, which, according to Stella Ray, provides her strength.[833] Nevertheless, Galadriel is passive, idealised by her white clothing and luminous beauty. The writers changed little about Galadriel in the adaptation process, besides using her voice to narrate the *Fellowship* prologue, which highlights her age and knowledge, but also her

[829] Margarita Carretero-González, "The loss of the Entwives: the biological dimension of gender construction in *The Lord of the Rings*" in ed. Sarah Wells, *Tolkien 2005: The Ring Goes Ever On Proceedings, Volume Two*, p. 384.
[830] In the novel, Glorfindel saved Frodo from the Black Riders, but Arwen undertook this task in the film for reasons of narrative clarity and expanding her role, as discussed by Kristin Thompson. Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*, p. 72.
[831] Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 171+478.
[832] Adams details two leitmotifs related to Arwen – *"Arwen Revealed"* and *"Arwen's Song"* – but even he admits that '[m]usically, Arwen Undómiel is referenced as a citizen of Rivendell'. To the best of my knowledge, these two leitmotifs only appear once each, so their leitmotif label perhaps misrepresents their function within the score. Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 44-48.
[833] Stella M. Ray, *Constructions of Gender and Sexuality in J.R.R. Tolkien's* The Silmarillion *and* The Lord of the Rings, doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University-Commerce, 2010, p. 26+102.

inactivity.[834] As Ray argues, Galadriel's powers pose a threat, but her elevated status prevents her from being typecast as the "dangerous woman".[835] Aspiring to Gandalf's mentor status, Galadriel is constrained by Middle-earth's patriarchy and her community's needs. Musically, as Adams observes, Galadriel's identity is bound up with her kingdom, almost invariably accompanied by Lothlórien's soundworld.[836]

Éowyn comes closest to defying socio-cultural expectations for women. Highly active with traditionally masculine skills like sword-fighting, she is eager to defend Rohan, despite opposition from her uncle and brother. She demonstrates leadership, takes part in battle in disguise, and defeats the Witch-King of Angmar.[837] Nevertheless, Éowyn is unable to fully perform as a man: she is prevented from fighting on several occasions, her appearance is decidedly feminine (long velvet dresses, flowing hair), and much of her narrative focuses on her unrequited love for Aragorn. Éowyn is simultaneously strong and restricted, a tension that is clearly manifested in her three leitmotifs.[838] The two-bar *"Éowyn Shieldmaiden of Rohan"* motif is the root of *"Éowyn and Théoden"* and *"Éowyn and Aragorn"*, which only differ in orchestration and the ending of the final phrase. Despite each having specific narrative purposes, the three leitmotifs primarily foreground Éowyn's character, so will be discussed here collectively under *"Éowyn's Theme"*.[839]

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[834] Galadriel's role was amplified in Jackson's later *Hobbit* trilogy, but these changes dramatically deviated from Tolkien's source text in a transparent attempt to counter criticism of the lack of female characters in Middle-earth.
[835] Ibid, p. 93. Helen P. Foley, "Women in Ancient Epic" in ed. John Miles Foley, *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 105.
[836] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 51.
[837] Ibid, p. 325.
[838] Notably, Théoden tells Éowyn in *Return* that, should he fall in battle, she will become ruler – this moment perhaps demonstrates his regard for her talents, as Rohan's monarchy was historically male-dominated. For the leitmotifs, see: Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 63-65.
[839] Ibid.



Figure 18: "Éowyn's Theme" or the "Éowyn and Théoden" leitmotif.

Each phrase begins with a rising perfect fifth (an interval typically associated with masculinity), which then turns downward, restricted within that opening interval. In the final phrase, the melody escapes with a confident ascending perfect fifth reasserting Éowyn's strength. The theme is based around a scale with Lydian inflections, which reflects Éowyn's difference to other women and Rohan's tonal palette, while its typically string-based scoring avoids instrumental colours (like horns or trumpets) with long-standing masculine associations. Éowyn's somewhat masculine musical characterisation does not make her an epic hero, but rather suggests that women can fill heroic roles while highlighting the assumed limits of the epic hero. Elsewhere, Shore has reinforced the characterisation of the hero with masculinity, so both evoking and eschewing masculine archetypes suggests that Éowyn's gender and patriarchal conceptions of heroism prevent her from embodying or functioning as the hero.

Subversively performing masculinity, Éowyn's musical links to Rohan's leitmotif show that she is not accepted by yet integral to her realm:[840]



Figure 19: the "Rohan Fanfare".

Shore bases both themes around similar (often related) modal centres, freely juxtaposing major and minor chords, and often facilitating a stepwise bass line.[841] Whereas *"Éowyn's Theme"* typically accompanies her struggles to endure, the full, ascending "*Rohan Fanfare"* marks hope, triumphs, or strength.[842] Yet, the "*Rohan Fanfare"* displays weakness through its absence or fragmentation. When introduced in *Towers*, Rohan is struggling, with King Théoden enchanted by Saruman. Having escaped Wormtongue's advances, *"Éowyn's Theme"* plays out in full as Éowyn surveys Edoras; a brief version of the *"Rohan Fanfare"* sounds as she spots Gandalf, Legolas, Gimli, and Aragorn in the distance – hope is coming.[843] Despite Rohan's troubles, Éowyn's leitmotif here demonstrates her continued inner strength, but the theme's restricted feel reflects how she alone cannot restore Rohan: Éowyn's long-term trials are tied both narratively and musically to Rohan. Unlike more traditional epic hero feats, Éowyn's endurance and dedication to Théoden are her triumphs, reimagining the hero figure as one who survives trials rather than actively performing heroics.

[840] Ibid, p. 61.
[841] The Rohan Theme is typically based around A or D, while Éowyn's Theme is normally based around C.
[842] Éowyn's defeat of the Witch-King is a notable exception here. The fullest versions of the Rohan Theme are heard when Gandalf frees Théoden from Saruman's curse, and the Rohirrim's charge during the Battle of the Pelennor Fields.
[843] There are brief quotes of the other Rohan-related leitmotifs, but the first appearance of *"Éowyn's Theme"* is the first Rohan-related leitmotif heard at any length. As the *"Rohan Fanfare"* has a more conventionally masculine character, it is unsurprising that four men are musically labelled as the source of hope. CD reference: *Towers*, "Edoras" c. 02:42-03:50.

Éowyn's most gender-defying moment is her defeat of the Witch-King of Angmar in *Return*, appropriately accompanied by the score's most triumphant version of her theme.[844] The unison French horns' presentation of the leitmotif (instead of strings) and faster tempo of this rendition suggest a more masculine profile. Only the theme's first phrase is used; the fragmentation of the leitmotif indicates Éowyn's inability to sustain this heightened masculinity, as she collapses after the Witch-King dies. Yet, here, Éowyn removes her disguise and openly proclaims her womanhood ('I am no man!') while still acting in a heroic, masculine manner. Recovering from her near-fatal injuries leads Éowyn to abandon her heroic aspirations in favour of becoming a healer herself (more explicitly stated in the novel). Éowyn's story ends with marriage to Faramir, highly conventional for a female character, which Shore reflects by abandoning Éowyn's leitmotif after the Witch-King encounter; *"Éowyn's Theme"* only reflects her desire to fight.

The final version of Éowyn's leitmotif, then, presents triumph and loss, making her heroic status undeniably complicated. While a moment of victory, Éowyn's heroic act sacrifices part of her identity. Shore's scoring does not convey the bittersweet nature of this moment, instead reflecting Éowyn's idealisation of heroics. Breaking free of patriarchal restrictions and proving her worth in battle makes her willing to ignore possible consequences. By abandoning *"Éowyn's Theme"* following the Witch-King scene, Shore demonstrates that Éowyn helps peace come to Middle-earth by sacrificing her masculine "shieldmaidenism" (to use Carretero-González's term) and

[844] CD reference: *Return*, "Shieldmaiden of Rohan" c. 02:34-02:43.

accepting the roles of healer and wife.[845] Although her masculine, heroic impulses made her uniquely suited to her task, Éowyn's sacrifice is arguably greater than that of any other character, embodying both her 'much desired great deed' and the loss of her heroic aspirations, so she does not complete the epic hero's journey.[846] Yet, her sacrifice neither saves Théoden nor defeats Mordor's armies, so is arguably misplaced. Shore's fragmentation of *"Éowyn's Theme"* during the Witch-King encounter hints at this misjudgement. Her 'unruly impulse to transcend prescribed gender roles [is] successfully thwarted': continuing to pursue glory in battle would result in either her death or detrimental consequences for her people.[847] In a sense, *"Éowyn's Theme"* represents Éowyn's self or subjectivity; once she gives up her yearning for battle, she suffers a tragic loss of self (bound up in her leitmotifs) and accepts the restrictions of her sex.

Having a female hero is a marked change from the archetypal male epic hero, but Éowyn's trajectory across the trilogy cannot entirely break free from convention. She completes only one heroic act (defeating the Witch-King), her unrequited love for Aragorn dominates her narrative, and she ultimately abandons heroics for conventional alternatives. Yet, Éowyn is Rohan's pillar of strength with an elevated rank and communal leadership role, and she actively seeks out unconventional pursuits for a woman and undergoes struggle. But, as a female secondary character, Middle-earth's patriarchal laws prevent Éowyn from pursuing her heroic aspirations, so, unlike Aragorn or Frodo, her heroism does not drive *LOTR*'s narrative. Éowyn's

[845] Like Frodo and Sam, Éowyn realises that battle cannot solve all of Middle-earth's problems, and heroism can come in other forms. Margarita Carretero-González, "The loss of the Entwives", p. 385
[846] Margarita Carretero-González, "The loss of the Entwives", p. 385.
[847] Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride, "Battling the Woman Warrior: Females and Combat in Tolkien and Lewis" *Mythlore*, vol. 25, no. 3/4 (2007), p. 36. John Miller, "Mapping Gender in Middle-earth" *Mythlore*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2016), p. 148.

failure to triumph can either be pessimistic – women are unable to sustain heroic performances – or more optimistic – she willingly made sacrifices to achieve something that men could not as a variety of caring or healing (typical female pursuits) cast in a masculine form (armed combat). Nevertheless, as her leitmotif demonstrates, Éowyn has more character development and agency than Arwen and Galadriel. All three characters make sacrifices of a different nature, but Arwen's and Galadriel's sacrifices (immortality and the resources of her realm respectively) are not "problematic" in a patriarchal context. Éowyn's sacrifice of the subversive part of her self is more akin to that of an epic hero. Éowyn is not an epic hero, but she aspires to be one for the greater part of the trilogy.

Middle-earth's landscapes and New Zealand

One of *LOTR*'s most significant franchise- and world-building elements is the New Zealand/Aotearoa landscape, which was used for the entire filming process, and has been likened to a participating character.[848] Jackson's practical reasons for filming in his home country – lower production costs, familiarity with New Zealand's film industry, and the topographical diversity of both islands – nonetheless have an ideological subtext that sheds light on *LOTR*'s epic nature. As Tolkien based Middle-earth's topography on British and European sites, *LOTR* frames New Zealand's natural aesthetic in Western terms.[849] Other countries could have provided similar landscapes

[848] Since this section of the chapter deals with complex issues surrounding the country's colonial past, all references to 'New Zealand' should be taken to refer to 'New Zealand/Aotearoa'. This choice was made for reasons of conciseness, ease of reading, and following the scholarly norm in the relevant literature.
[849] Identifying the real-life inspiration for Middle-earth's landscapes and places has been a common narrative in Tolkien discourse, particularly more vernacular discussions. For example: John Garth, *The Worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien: The Places That Inspired Middle-earth* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2020). Daniela Carl, Sara Kindon, and Karen Smith, "Tourists' Experiences of Film Locations: New Zealand as '*Middle-Earth*'" *Tourism Geographies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2007), p. 54.

(the United States, Britain/Ireland, or Scandinavia), so choosing New Zealand betrays assumptions about the country's suitability for staging Tolkien's novel owing to its age, diversity, emptiness, "unspoilt" nature, and potential for sublime encounters. However, *LOTR*'s presentation of New Zealand suggests problematic (and often contradictory) ideas about the country's pre-history, colonial past, and how it is dealing with that legacy. The score also reflects Middle-earth's history and how that has shaped its landscapes.

The diversity of New Zealand's landscapes enabled the vast majority of Middle-earth to be shot on location, or inspired the construction of studio sets.[850] Middle-earth's cultural status as an immensely diverse and complex Secondary World frames New Zealand as vast, diverse, and culturally and "historically" important. New Zealand has exploited its ability to contain Middle-earth's natural and geological diversity, providing the tourist industry with a unique selling point in the long-standing tradition of Tolkien-related tourism.[851] However, containment has significant ideological implications. On the one hand, Middle-earth's fusion of archaic European civilisations frames New Zealand as shaped by those same European influences, which seemingly erases Maori history. This framing arguably continues the colonial aim 'to create a

[850] Fangorn Forest is an example of a studio set, as the kind of tree and look of the forest that the filmmakers wanted was more fantastical than any found in New Zealand. Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers: The Extended Edition*, commentary.
[851] This tradition had origins soon after LOTR's publication, but developed considerably after Tolkien's death, whereby his burial place in Oxford has become a pilgrimage site for devoted fans. Tolkien's grave is actually listed as a tourist attraction for Oxford on Trip Advisor. "Wolvercote Cemetery", *TripAdvisor*, available at https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186361-d11878424-Reviews-Wolvercote_Cemetery-Oxford_Oxfordshire_England.html, accessed 04/01/2021. David Doughan, "J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biographical Sketch" *The Tolkien Society*, available at https://www.tolkiensociety.org/author/biography/, accessed 04/01/2021. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 556. Rodanthi Tzanelli, "Constructing the 'cinematic tourist'", p. 34.

'neo-Europe''.[852] On the other, Middle-earth seemingly provides an imagined prehistory that justifies New Zealand's contemporary diversity. As Franklin Ginn argues, the natural world can function as a neutral terrain for a shared sense of national identity, providing New Zealand with a dual identity as a diverse, independent nation and a "host" for Middle-earth.[853] However, mapping New Zealand and Middle-earth onto one another means that the Secondary World's "realism" arguably violates Secondary Belief. The audience's knowledge of *LOTR*'s connections with New Zealand ultimately stems from outside sources rather than the film.[854] In a sense, New Zealand's exploitation of its Middle-earth associations represents reverse-Secondary-World-building, whereby the Primary World frames itself as an embodiment of a Secondary World. As Rodanthi Tzanelli notes, film tourists look upon New Zealand with the "tourist gaze", expecting to see Middle-earth, which New Zealand has accepted, even encouraged.[855] Middle-earth may be contained within New Zealand, but New Zealand is not contained within Middle-earth, which is crucial for understanding containment's importance for epic scope in both Primary and Secondary Worlds.

Understanding New Zealand's relationship with *LOTR* requires an understanding of its relation to Britain and history as a British colony. Compared to much of the Empire, Britain's relationship with New Zealand was unusual – it was colonised quite late (1840) and was independent by 1947 – but its complex legacy continues into the

[852] Franklin Ginn, "Extension, subversion, containment: eco-nationalism and (post)colonial nature in Aotearoa New Zealand" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* vol. 33, no. 3 (2008), p. 345.
[853] Ibid, p. 338.
[854] As Rodanthi Tzanelli notes, *LOTR* ultimately provides a simulated version of the New Zealand landscape, rather than labelling Middle-earth on-screen as New Zealand. Rodanthi Tzanelli, "Constructing the 'cinematic tourist'", p. 29.
[855] For example, the Tourism New Zealand website labelled the country as 'Home of Middle-Earth'. Daniela Carl, Sara Kindon, and Karen Smith, "Tourists' Experiences of Film Locations: New Zealand as '*Middle-Earth*'", p. 54. Alfio Leotta, *Touring the Screen*, p. 7. Rodanthi Tzanelli, "Constructing the 'cinematic tourist'", p. 29.

present day.[856] British culture and structures became embedded in New Zealand's life, from English as an official language to continued Commonwealth membership.[857] Colonial rule influenced New Zealand's agriculture, biodiversity shifts, and landscape changes (botanical gardens, urban development, farming), as Ginn argues.[858] Ashley Jackson points out that Victorian advertisements, aimed at British migrants, described New Zealand as the 'Britain of the South', demonstrating how openly Britain moulded New Zealand in its own image.[859]

LOTR's release coincided with significant economic benefits: the significant increase in tourists to New Zealand prompted by major tourist campaigns that equated visiting New Zealand with visiting Middle-earth; heavy government investment in the film industry; and increased immigration further diversified the nation's ethnic profile.[860] While not wholly responsible for these changes, *LOTR*'s impact highlights the country's complex interactions between landscape and people in light of colonialism's legacy in reimagining the New Zealand-Britain relationship. As well as depicting varied

[856] For a brief history of New Zealand as a colony, see: Warren Moran, Raewyn Dalziel, Keith Sinclair, Conrad Alexander Blyth, Jack Vowles, and William Hosking Oliver, "New Zealand" Britannica Academic, available at https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4663/levels/collegiate/article/New-Zealand/108762, accessed on 10/03/2019.
[857] Ibid.
[858] Franklin Ginn, "Extension, subversion, containment", p. 342. "New Zealand" *World Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), accessed online.
[859] Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 69.
[860] Christopher Riches and Peter Stalker claim that 2.8 million tourists visit New Zealand every year, citing *LOTR* as a key factor for those numbers. The literature on *LOTR*'s financial impact on New Zealand is surprisingly large, for example: Christopher Riches and Peter Stalker, *A Guide to Countries of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), accessed online. Stan Jones, "Fixing a Heritage: Inscribing Middle Earth onto New Zealand" in ed. Ernest Mathijs, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), p. 285. Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*, p. 283. Rodanthi Tzanelli, "Constructing the 'cinematic tourist'", p. 27. Deborah Jones and Karen Smith, "Middle-earth Meets New Zealand: Authenticity and Location in the Making of *The Lord of the Rings*" *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 42, no. 5 (2005), p. 924. Anne Buchmann, "Planning and Development in Film Tourism: Insights into the Experience of *Lord of the Rings* Film Guides" *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2010), p. 77. Alfio Leotta, *Touring the Screen*, p. 162-163.

landscapes, *LOTR* uses Middle-earth to present New Zealand as still negotiating its post-independence identity. Stan Jones argues that Jackson's Middle-earth presents a misleadingly utopian image of New Zealand by relying heavily on natural landscapes, invoking imperial notions for defining and establishing nations.[861] Middle-earth and New Zealand have become so synonymous with one another that they appear simultaneously realistic and fantastical. Neither place belongs fully in the Primary World or Secondary World, which New Zealand's tourist industry acknowledges by using marketing rhetoric along the lines of "New Zealand is Middle-earth", as Tzanelli observes.[862] This strategy of conflating the real and the imagined has proven highly successful, as Leotta suggests, with surveys suggesting that interest in *LOTR* and its locations remain key reasons for visiting New Zealand.[863] Middle-earth and New Zealand function simultaneously as centre and periphery, representing but not quite "being" each other through their landscape diversity and realistic-fantastic tension. That tension is manifest in other binaries – old-new, native-foreign, urban-rural, commercial-independent – that reflect how both Middle-earth and New Zealand are in transitional periods (the War of the Ring and post-independence respectively). In these terms, *LOTR*'s long-term economic impact has had epic implications for New Zealand beyond its film industry.

In presenting Middle-earth's landscapes and their histories, Shore's scoring choices (including, and perhaps especially, leitmotifs) can create ambiguity. Although typically named after places, many leitmotifs often accompany scenes about that realm's

[861] Stan Jones, "Fixing a Heritage: Inscribing Middle Earth onto New Zealand", p. 286. Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 111.
[862] Rodanthi Tzanelli, "Constructing the 'cinematic tourist'", p. 22. Deborah Jones and Karen Smith, "Middle-earth Meets New Zealand", p. 923.
[863] Alfio Leotta, *Peter Jackson*, p. 98. Alfio Leotta, *Touring the Screen*, p. 171. Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 556.

character set in other locations.[864] This blurring of landscape and character questions whether the landscape defines the characters or vice versa, a relationship heightened in New Zealand's colonial and post-colonial histories. Like other former colonies, post-colonial discourse characterises New Zealand's indigenous Maori population as the country's "heart", even though the Maori are themselves an immigrant population (from the Pacific islands), and New Zealand was one of the last countries to become inhabited.[865] In a post-independence 'cultural renaissance' towards national self-definition, Maori culture has become symbolic of New Zealand as a whole – such as the famous *haka* – alongside natural images or symbols, like the kiwi.[866] Contemporary ideas around New Zealand and recent revived interest in Maori culture have connected the Maori and the country's 'rugged' natural landscape to national identity.[867]

To balance the histories of Middle-earth and New Zealand with the demands of the filmic narrative, Shore links narratively significant characters and their homelands in both the past and present. Frodo and Sam, for example, are typically accompanied by the Shire idiom (sometimes solely through Celtic-inspired colours), even in Mordor. Arguably, these connections between place and people show the latter's pride, devotion to, or power over the former, which suggests that landscape-character

[864] A couple of examples: Boromir's suggestion of using the Ring to protect Gondor in *Fellowship* is accompanied by the *"Realm of Gondor"* theme in solo horn; Boromir and Aragorn discussing Minas Tirith in Lothlórien, with the *"Minas Tirith"* leitmotif in horn and trumpet with solemn cello accompaniment; the Rohirrim charging on the Pelennor Fields to the *"Rohan Theme"*, despite being in Gondor.
[865] For some brief discussion around New Zealand's Maori population, see: "Maori", in eds. Anne Kerr and Edmund Wright, *A Dictionary of World History, third edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), accessed online. Warren Moran, Raewyn Dalziel, Keith Sinclair, Conrad Alexander Blyth, Jack Vowles, and William Hosking Oliver, "New Zealand" Britannica Academic.
[866] Warren Moran, Raewyn Dalziel, Keith Sinclair, Conrad Alexander Blyth, Jack Vowles, and William Hosking Oliver, "New Zealand" Britannica Academic.
[867] Ibid.

relationships are reciprocal. Characters tend to view landscapes as indicative of the communities that inhabit them; in the case of Frodo and Sam, they undertook their quest to save the Shire, but the Shire also sustains them when the quest is hardest, as Adams notes (such as the 'taste of strawberries' speech in *Return*).[868] Musical representations of landscape can function as idealised memories, demonstrating character, or marking on-screen appearances. By being defined by and defining characters, landscape actively participates in the narrative: nature can be ally or enemy and provides epic dimensions for the "good vs. evil" narrative. Musically characterising Middle-earth's landscapes through their populations' idioms historicises them: each landscape has and continues to witness myth and history, shaping and being shaped by the populations of the world.

Film critics almost invariably mention how *LOTR* highlights New Zealand's dramatic natural landscapes, but rarely acknowledge how much these landscapes affect the audience's perceptions of Middle-earth and New Zealand. Supposedly "unspoilt", New Zealand and Middle-earth lack significant urban areas, display their pre-history as markers of age and "ancientness", and contain diverse landscapes rarely seen in such close proximity. These characteristics are often displayed by characters moving across or around Middle-earth's landscapes. For example, replicas of Tolkien's maps and particular sequences (such as Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli's multi-day attempt to catch the Uruk-hai) explicitly demonstrate Middle-earth's emptiness.[869] Rooted in primeval and medieval imagery, Middle-earth's presentation of New Zealand's landscapes and

[868] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 335. CD reference: *Return*, "The Mouth of Sauron" c. 04:49-05:28.

[869] Jackson was concerned about confusion around Middle-earth's geography, so Tolkien's maps on-screen provided a means of orientation. Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh, and Philippa Boyens, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring – The Extended Edition*, commentary.

inhabitants reflects complex ideas around colonial ideology and the country's topography. A transparent example lies in how *LOTR*'s mapping of Middle-earth's "unspoilt ancient wilderness" onto New Zealand actually reinforces the constructed idea of "wilderness", since no such thing exists in either world. As Liam Campbell, for instance, explores, existing literature on Tolkien's presentation of nature tends to frame Middle-earth's alleged wilderness simplistically as a nature-industry binary.[870] However, *LOTR*'s lingering shots of Middle-earth's (and New Zealand's) empty landscapes and panoramic vistas fetishises nature along colonialist lines as both beautiful (and thus valuable) and something that 'must be disciplined'.[871] Similarly, Middle-earth rarely provides the signs of pre-colonial life and environment that constructions of "wilderness" and "natural beauty" rely upon, and those that do exist are highly fantastical. *LOTR* inserts European-inspired structures, landmarks, and natural features into New Zealand through post-production effects and, in some cases, literally. The Shire is the most extreme example of the latter: originally designed to be temporary, the set is now a permanent feature of the New Zealand landscape as a voyeuristic spectacle for tourists, offering a 'mythic view of an uncorrupted land'.[872] Many Middle-earth realms feature imagery of ancient and colonial-era European civilisations, but the films encourage viewers to admire the world's rural, uninhabited areas. Rather than challenging colonial characterisations of New Zealand, *LOTR* perpetuates their contradictions.

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[870] Liam Campbell, "Nature" in ed. Stuart Lee, *A Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pg. 431-445.
[871] The idea of "unspoilt" landscapes often occurs within a racialised binary with "civilised" or "tamed" landscapes. Franklin Ginn, "Extension, subversion, containment", p. 338-340.
[872] "Our Story" *Hobbiton Movie Set Official Website*, available at https://www.hobbitontours.com/en/our-story/, accessed 13/03/2021. Roy Parkhurst, "The persistence of cacogenics in nationalist mythology: the case of *Lord of the Rings*" in eds. Harriet Margolis, Sean Cubitt, Barry King, Thierry Jutel, *Studying the event film*, p. 228.

Shore reintroduces locations or characters after lengthy absences by using their associations with leitmotifs or particular timbres.[873] For instance, a brief, rhythmically condensed version of the *"Rohan Fanfare"* accompanies the return to Edoras at the beginning of *Return*.[874] Reasserting musical-spatial connections is more common than with characters, reflecting the importance of locations for characterising their inhabitants. For what could be mere signposts, musical accompaniments to changes of location, character or narrative thread reaffirm a community's core values and reflect changes. For example, when Gandalf, Théoden and company visit a "wounded" Isengard in *Return*, the *"Isengard Theme"* remains present and signals that Saruman 'is still strong'.[875] The textural divide between the leitmotif's bass woodwind scoring and high, dissonant violin accompaniment create an eerie uncertainty around Isengard's assumed defeat.[876] Middle-earth's locations or peoples are not musically static to reflect their continual evolution and mutual redefinition. Often, Shore structures landscape-related motivic development like a lifetime. *"The Realm of Gondor"* leitmotif offers a good example: we hear the motif in *Fellowship* in its infancy as a solo horn; in *Towers*, triumphant versions of the theme appear in flashbacks to Gondor's "Golden Age"; in *Return*, the theme's "*Decline"* variation reflects Gondor's seemingly inevitable defeat, before the Fourth Age variant signals the new phase of Gondor's history. The development of realm-specific leitmotifs enhances narrative clarity (especially

[873] This strategy is particularly useful between film releases. Jackson considered adding subtitles of the place names to explicitly denote where the on-screen action had moved to. Arguably, Shore's score took over this job! Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring: The Extended Edition*, commentary.
[874] CD reference: *Return*, "Return to Edoras" c. 01:01-01:20.
[875] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 274. CD reference: *Return*, "The Foot of Orthanc" c. 00:00-00:17.
[876] Jackson's trilogy does not return to Isengard after this moment, but the "Scouring of the Shire" chapters in Tolkien's novel prove that Saruman was not completely defeated by the Ents.

between instalments) and comments on how the War of the Ring affects each locale. Place mirrors people (past and present), and vice versa.

Middle-earth's emptiness and unspoilt nature affects conceptions of Shore's web of leitmotifs, which do not distinguish between different sizes or types of place.[877] However, the wider realm themes are more numerous than more localised leitmotifs, which suggests that the identities of urban areas align with but are also equally significant for defining their wider realms. For example, while melodically distinct, the brass and string scoring of the *"Minas Tirith"* leitmotif is typically Gondorian. Urban areas in "good" realms primarily appear on screen as political and military centres, important targets for evil forces to attack. This notably differs from evil realms being either urbanised or uninhabited wastelands, one of the most explicit characterisations of urbanisation, modernity, and colonial invasion as evil, although the opposition of good/rural/indigenous and evil/urban/colonist is not clear-cut. Shore's leitmotifs are particularly important for supporting and romanticising Tolkien's rural ideal as central to realm identity.[878] New Zealand's natural beauty represents an image of rural life stuck in a pre-industrial past, characterised by the folk-pastoral sounds of past Europe-centric civilisations as further colonial commodification. Hobbiton's permanent existence in New Zealand is testament to how rural Middle-earth has shaped New Zealand in its own image.

[877] The names of Shore's leitmotifs (as given by Adams) show that the motifs can represent entire realms (*"The Realm of Gondor"*), specific topographical features (*"Mount Doom"*), and cities (*"Minas Tirith"*).
[878] The fact that Mordor and Isengard attack Gondor's and Rohan's urban centres respectively demonstrates the imperial targeting of cities because they were deemed of greater value than rural areas. There is an interesting parallel here with the colonisation of New Zealand: historians, including Victor Kiernan, have attributed much of the Maori's success in resisting attack from colonists to their knowledge and utilisation of New Zealand's complex and sparse landscape, not necessarily keeping to their settlement strongholds. Victor Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes to Other Cultures in the Imperial Age* (London: Serif, 1995), p. 274-276.

Shore's score evokes natural diversity, scale, and contrasts by exploring ideas of space and naturalness. As demonstrated by the music of Moria, originally a Dwarvish realm, Shore depicts immense spatial dimensions to comment on the region's inhabitants. Shore characterised the Dwarves more through timbre and orchestration than leitmotifs, evoking expansive depth through low register, close chord spacing, and dynamic swells.[879] Favouring parameters that have a spectrum between two poles – thin to thick texture or timbres, loud to soft dynamic – for depicting the Dwarves' underground environment, Shore uses several simultaneously to provide a multi-dimensional sense of space. Scoring the Fellowship's journey through Moria with slow-moving harmonies and rhythms reflects the illusion of time slowing when underground.[880] Temporal depth is relayed through generically archaic vocal style of male chorus open-fifth chanting and drones, frequently used in film to convey "ancient" history.[881] The landscape's history and scale inform one another – the Dwarves dug deeper over time. Time often defines space across Middle-earth (including visual allusions to past Primary World eras), illustrating Middle-earth's "ancientness" and situating the quest within a grander good-versus-evil struggle. Time functions in Middle-earth as both an organisational and an aesthetic category: "ancientness" is depth of time and space, and the idealisation or fetishisation of age. Shore's depiction of vast space aestheticises "ancientness" to reference Moria's history beyond *LOTR*, and reflect how space and time evoke and idealise one another.

[879] Shore did not create many Dwarvish leitmotifs because they are less narratively important (this changed for *The Hobbit* trilogy). Although the Dwarves participate in the wider War of the Ring, Jackson omitted this from his adaptation for reasons of narrative clarity and time constraints. Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King: The Extended Edition*, commentary with the director and the writers, New Line Cinema (2004), accessed 04/02/2019.
[880] CD reference: *Fellowship*, "Moria" c. 00:00-01:06.
[881] An example of chant-like singing in another film score is Hans Zimmer's score for *Gladiator* (2000).

A sense of history is crucial to Middle-earth as a believable, complex Secondary World: akin to nineteenth-century nationalist rhetoric, if Middle-earth has a history, it has long existed. Moria's cavernous halls are evidence of that time and history, requiring vast space to contain it.

Music articulates space by seeming to fill it, which is illustrated by a scene in one of Moria's cathedral-like halls.[882] The characters and audience never see the entire room, being under-lit and too large for the frame. Shore creates 'one of the score's longest builds': a large ensemble crescendo, rising string melody, and expansion of the orchestra's register (although not extreme high pitches, being still underground).[883] After so much low underscore, this climax creates a feeling of opening out and marvelling at a vast expansiveness. Perhaps surprisingly, however, Shore avoids explicit references to sacred music (a chorus, the 'Dies Irae' motif, or instruments like the organ), but uses more generic signifiers like quasi-hymn-like melody and homophonic texture. Instead, Shore suggests that Moria's grandeur and majestic architectural achievement is a product of its diversity and scale. This cue differs so markedly from the rest of the Moria scoring, illustrating how Shore musically historicises this space: once a prosperous city, this hall represents the height of Dwarvish mining achievement. The score tells the histories and longevity of Middle-earth's landscapes by providing a sense of temporal depth. By not just representing landscapes (and their inhabitants) as they are in the narrative's present, Shore cultivates an almost tourist-like experience for the viewer, inviting us to marvel at and fetishise Middle-earth's history.

[882] CD reference: *Fellowship*, "Balin's Tomb" c. 00:00-01:21
[883] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 178.

Middle-earth's landscapes also operate within a natural-unnatural spectrum to reflect their histories and Tolkien's anti-industrial message. While the score connects "evil" with unnatural landscapes, "good" spaces evoke a sense of untouched naturalness that present cooperation with nature as the ultimate expression of good morality. As an example, the Ents of Fangorn Forest, who resemble trees themselves, are initially apathetic, so their moral leanings are not musically coded. Instead, Shore elevates an ensemble of wooden instruments with (unsurprisingly) "wooden" timbres (including marimba and log drums, according to Adams) above the main orchestra.[884] Some of this percussion has associations of antiquity (like the tam-tam), which suggest that the Ents are essentially unchanged over their long history. Similarly, in the first cue related to the Ents, the meandering bassoon material feels ungoverned by time.[885] The listener cannot determine the Ents' morality (as the Romantic-modernist binary has been thoroughly mapped onto good-evil by *Towers*), so the cue reflects the forest's character: old, left alone, and ungoverned by human forces (represented aurally by Western art music conventions). Later, the Entish idiom changes as they align with "good" forces and their Westernised idiom, as demonstrated by the highlighted chorus when the Ents attack Isengard.[886] Associated with nature unleashing its power, the initial rhythmically augmented presentation of the *"Nature's Reclamation"* leitmotif mirrors the Ents' majestic slowness, but the augmentation reverses as the Ents begin marching, using a high, clear boy-soprano voice. Film scores' use of boy's voices is typically associated with purity, naturalness, and righteousness: the Ents are morally right in attacking Isengard (following Tolkien's philosophy of some battles being

[884] Doug Adams, "The Music of The Lord of the Rings Films – Part II: The Two Towers – The Annotated Score", p. 7.
[885] CD reference: *Towers*, "Fangorn" c. 03:29-04:18.
[886] CD reference: *Towers*, "The Last March of the Ents" c. 00:12-01:04.

necessary, as Franco Manni and Simone Bonechi argue) and reinstating nature's power over industry.[887] The juxtaposition of youthful voices and Middle-earth's oldest beings embodies nature's timelessness (existing outside of time), suggesting a long-standing tradition of nature aiding the forces of good. As *LOTR*'s most explicit personification of Nature, the Ents have distinct echoes of the supernatural, magical, or divine elements that aid heroes in classical epics. Blurring boundaries, the Ents reflect the reciprocal relationship between and epic significance that space and character have for one another.

In comparison, Isengard's industrial musical style echoes the site's transformation from a tree-filled haven to cavernous mines, emphasising percussion, and particular rhythmic and metrical patterns.[888] Evoking Jackson's "realistic" fantasy ideal to characterise Isengard, the industrial associations and metallic timbres of Shore's percussion choices (especially the anvil) blur diegetic boundaries. Isengard's relentless industry could almost threaten the audience through the score: because the diegetic blurring heightens similarities between the Primary and Secondary soundworlds, the Secondary World seems to be aurally "invading" the Primary World score. Besides timbre, the *"Five-Beat Pattern"* rhythmic ostinato almost invariably accompanies Isengard or the Uruk-hai on-screen. The anvil- and drum-marked 5/4 metre, accenting the first and fourth beats, feels unnatural, like a twisted heartbeat. As in Gustav Holst's "Mars, the Bringer of War" from *The Planets*, the *"Five-Beat Pattern"* suggests the heartbeat of war: Isengard is a highly "spoilt" landscape, sustained by unnatural, power-hungry pursuits. However, the constancy of Isengard's mechanical music

[887] Franco Manni and Simone Bonechi, "The Complexity of Tolkien's Attitude Towards the Second World War", p. 34.
[888] Typical Isengard scoring can be found via the following CD reference: *Fellowship*, "The Caverns of Isengard" c. 01:26-01:56.

arguably has anti-epic implications of force triumphing over fate. While Frodo's, Aragorn's, and Gandalf's journeys are all partially predetermined, Isengard's greed-driven activities provide an unanticipated obstacle. Isengard subverts epic meta-category norms because its unnatural characterisation extends beyond the narrative to challenge expected relationships between evil, fantasy, and epic.

A supernatural unnaturalness characterises Minas Morgul, which Shore provides with two contrasting musical qualities in *Return*: the uncanny and the grotesque. The former draws on horror film score tropes and parameter extremities, while the latter presents a crudely exoticised version of *"The Evil of the Ring"* motif with heavy militaristic percussion and brass (see Appendix 2 for more details).

The contrasting uncanny and grotesque supernatural characters of Minas Morgul show evil going beyond the fantastical: the supernatural is feared, while fantasy, if feared, is normally misunderstood. The Morgul vale's (apparent) emptiness and initial quasi-horror scoring encourages the audience to identify the city as a supernatural phenomenon in its own right. Minas Morgul's supernatural quality arguably shows an undesirable side to epic scope, encroaching on unnatural and dangerous. Most evocations of scope frame diversity as a positive attribute, but Minas Morgul challenges this automatic assumption. Minas Morgul's difference to other Middle-earth soundworlds indicates scope: evil here has gone too far, distorted from "natural" sound (with problematic exoticised overtones). Thus, scope warns of evil's power and capacity to corrupt on an epic scale (Minas Morgul being part of Mordor). Shore's score depicts scope as revealing the dark side of landscapes alongside their natural splendour, countering idealisation of Middle-earth, and following epic meta-category convention in blurring realistic and fantastic.

According to Alex Ross, Middle-earth's reality-fantasy and natural-unnatural tensions are clearly articulated in Jackson's and Shore's engagement the sublime aesthetic as part of the epic meta-category.[889] Kiene Wurth claims that definitions of the twentieth century sublime have put greater emphasis on the awe experienced after (or as) something happens, but the difficulty to overcome the initial fear remains.[890] Fantasy's impulse to 'see familiar things […] from an entirely new angle' can be frightening – Middle-earth, for instance, as Natalya Prilustkava notes, is often read allegorically as a warning against dependency on technology and losing connection with nature.[891] So, sublime moments remind the audience that they are observing the War of the Ring at a historical, geographical, fantastical, and epic distance. Nevertheless, effective use of the sublime depends on the audience's emotional investment in the characters and narrative; without it, the audience will not experience the necessary sublime-provoked fear around the characters' failures. Middle-earth is an eminently suitable location for (epic) sublime encounters, being an elite imaginary world full of extreme topographical features, and hosting a narrative of extreme life-or-death circumstances.

The climactic sequence around Mount Doom and the Black Gate in *Return* offers an iconic sublime moment.[892] In this emotionally exhausting sequence, the audience's anxiety that "good" will fail transforms into relief as the Ring is destroyed, before

[889] Alex Ross quoted by Ian Nathan, *Anything You Can Imagine*, p. 444.
[890] Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, *Musically sublime: indeterminacy, infinity, irresolvability* (Ashland: Fordham University Press, 2009), p. 6.
[891] T. A. Shippey, "History in Words: Tolkien's Ruling Passion" in eds. Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, *The Lord of the Rings 1954-2004*, p. 25. Natalya Prilutskaya, "The Problem of Machine Technology in *The Lord of the Rings*" in ed. Sarah Wells, *Tolkien 2005: The Ring Goes Ever On Proceedings, Volume Two*, p. 312.
[892] CD reference: *Return*, "Mount Doom" c. 01:27-04:08 and "The Crack of Doom" c. 00:00-04:01 (whole track).

sharing the Fellowship's fears that Frodo and Sam have perished as Mount Doom explodes. Shore's scoring has equally tumultuous contrasts and melodramatic signifiers (see Appendix 2 for more details). Dominating this sequence, the chorus functions here as a hybrid of character and audience because the War of the Ring is a myth, legend, or epic within both Middle-earth and the Primary World. So, the chorus articulates the fear and premature sorrow of the Fellowship, as well as the same emotions experienced by both the filmic audience and the army as audience. The sublime experience thus occurs for both the filmic audience and the on-screen characters.

However, the sublime arguably takes another form in *LOTR*, one that has been mistaken for confusion about the trilogy's narrative and characters. As 'one of the largest and most detailed worlds ever made by a single author', Middle-earth occasionally perplexes audiences, which arguably provides a sublime experience.[893] Middle-earth's sheer magnitude and diversity encourages audience fears that they will not follow the narrative. The sublime's sense of relief or pleasure comes from so-called "universal" elements for those unfamiliar with the narrative: spectacular scenery, comedy, impressive special effects and stunts, and Shore's score. *LOTR* can be viewed as a twelve-hour sublime experience, triggered by its epic scope. Existing Tolkien fans experience *LOTR*'s sublime nature differently: plot-based confusion may be replaced instead by a fear of loss of textual fidelity, or missing production or narrative details, famous passages from the novel, or "Easter eggs" (small references to ideas or

[893] Andrew Marr, "Sleuths, Spies & Sorcerers: Andrew Marr's Paperback Heroes – Episode 2: Fantasy" BBC Four, first broadcast 15th November 2017, watched 3rd December 2017. Mark J. P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, p. 47.

objects), which are markers of modern fandom, according to Kirsten Pullen.[894] Similarly, fans of Shore's score may experience fear of missing musical references, and experience relief when they recognise particular leitmotifs, characteristic instruments, or musical clues about the narrative or Middle-earth.[895] Both Jackson and Shore include such references actively to cultivate an immersive, sublime experience, demonstrating their understanding of the modern fan. Interest and engagement in the wider franchise demonstrate how fans want to recreate the sublime experience of the films.

Conclusion

Above all, Shore's score is characterised by diversity, endeavouring to match Jackson's and Tolkien's evocations of Middle-earth's richness. But, the novel, films, and score alike create a Secondary World that frequently subverts or comments on expectations of an epic. Aragorn's self-doubt tempers more typical epic hero qualities; representations of evil landscapes and characters connects evil with not just the unnatural and exotic, as many epics do, but also modernity; and the bravest actions of the unexpected Hobbit heroes are scored with some of the most conventionally "heroic" music of the trilogy. For Middle-earth's many races and places, Shore fashioned different colours and materials to highlight both similarities and differences, developing them in accordance with the narrative. The epic character of Middle-

[894] The use of "Easter eggs" has been made famous by Disney's animated features, almost all of which include the shape of Mickey Mouse's ears in the film world's aesthetic. Numerous lists of such "Easter eggs" exist online, such as: "Hidden Mickey/Gallery", *The Disney Wiki,* available at https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Hidden_Mickey/Gallery, accessed 25/03/2020. Examples of possible *LOTR* "Easter eggs" include Jackson's cameos, or horse motifs in Rohan. Kirsten Pullen, "*The Lord of the Rings* Online Blockbuster Fandom: Pleasure and Commerce" in ed. Ernest Mathijs, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*, p. 173.

[895] The publication of Doug Adams' book, marketed as a "must-have" for fans of the score, almost provides a challenge: if you are a "real" *LOTR* fan, then you must be able to identify the leitmotifs listed and understand their connections.

earth's musical landscape lies in being believably diverse and complex, which frames the world as a heightened version of reality. Shore scores the fantastic with sounds that have Primary World associations, which gives us 'a security of recognition that woos [us] to believe' that Middle-earth's history is *our* history, so diversity becomes a marker of believability or "realism".[896]

As one in several inter-connected texts, Shore's *LOTR* can only ever function as one version, but does not merely reproduce the novel's and films' engagements with the epic meta-category. It is often Shore's music that articulates parts of this engagement explicitly: the score amplifies notions of epic within the cinematic world, but also critiques particular tropes, often pointing to problematic ideological frames of reference. Like Jackson's adaptation, Shore's *LOTR* takes a novel rooted in a particular idea of what the epic meta-category was – the eternal "good versus evil" battle, the everyman hero, idealised rural landscapes, inevitability of change – and enhances some of its more subversive tendencies as a meditation on where the meta-category is in the twenty-first century. Although much of the score still relies upon pre-existing binaries (Romantic-modern, West-East, good-evil), it also challenges them, such as the *"Fellowship Theme"* and its minimal racial coding. Shore's *LOTR* presents the twenty-first century epic meta-category as referencing and clinging to its past while acknowledging that those tropes are often untenable for the present and future. This fusion of long-standing and more modern tropes has in part caused categorisation difficulties for LOTR across all media. Many of the tensions within *LOTR* have long been part of the epic meta-category, and Shore does not attempt to present one side or another as preferable. *LOTR* celebrates the continued definitional difficulties around

[896] Paul Kocher, *Master of Middle-earth*, p. 2-10.

the epic meta-category and frames them as not only desirable for, but essential to the meta-category.

Conclusion

This thesis has presented an initial exploration of music's relationship with the epic meta-category, but it is impossible in one exercise to do full justice to the wealth of material on the epic and the opportunities that the meta-category can offer musicology. The research questions posed in this thesis go far beyond the boundaries set here, particularly concerning the restrictions placed on repertoire, like examining only texts written in English. Similarly, the definitional and theoretical writing on epic explored in the opening two chapters was extensive, but does not represent all such literature. So, this thesis could only ever provide one version of epic's meaning and use, albeit one that has gained importance and widespread use in the wider critical landscape. Throughout its historical usage, epic has had numerous meanings and that pluralistic nature will never change: as a meta-category, epic is in constant flux and evades a single fixed definition.

Nevertheless, each chapter has explored some key themes around the meta-category and the potential expansion of its discourse into musical scholarship. In Chapter 1, we saw how discourse on epic in literature and film widened definitions of the term, prompting a re-evaluation of epic as a meta-category rather than a single unitary concept, before turning to the *dramatis personae* of epics. Chapter 2 argued that the organisation and regulation of the epic is highly significant for the nature of the meta-category, highlighting the complexity of concepts like time, the sublime, and commercialisation, and outlined the pragmatic boundaries for this thesis's case studies. The four case study chapters all demonstrated music's ability to critique the epic meta-category and existing definitions of the term. Sibelius's *Kullervo* poses the idea of the anti-epic, problematising both the existing epic (the *Kalevala* tale) and its subsequent reception, opening the path to further discussion about the way music interacts with pre-existing epic texts and their reception histories. Mahler's *Resurrection* addresses two more modern aspects of the epic – scale and the sublime – and shows how

topic theory can usefully engage with the epic meta-category and how it is manifest musically. Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica* is the case study furthest removed from the epic meta-category, critiquing previous identification of *Scott* and the original diary narrative as epic. And Shore's score for *The Lord of the Rings* highlights the meta-category's central contradictions and reliance on problematic material or concepts, exploring those around gender, exoticism, and issues of place. All four case studies reinforce the idea that epic is a fluid construct and, to a certain extent, relies on the ambiguity of artistic expression (in any media) to be effective.

Like other media, music can highlight and develop aspects of the epic meta-category as much as it can be shaped by it. Music can continue to illuminate the meta-category as a multi-media interpretive framework, challenging the scholarly over-reliance on text, and reinforcing the importance of critically adopting the adjective "epic" alongside the noun. Music can reflect epic's diversity and fluidity, while being shaped by the meta-category's framework that it can highlight or interrogate. Epic's potential uses for music are too numerous to appreciate from the examination of four case studies alone; further study is needed to uncover epic's full potential. What is perhaps more interesting is how epic as an interpretive framework can also apply to musicology and historiography: each case study chapter here highlighted the ways in which the music had an impact on something beyond the "work", whether transforming the composer's reception or changing the economic circumstances of an entire country. The idea of the epic meta-category has the potential to reconfigure how we think about music alongside other artistic media, both in terms of the individual work and the collective art form. Beyond the individual work, however, it has become clear that epic operates over and above music (as it does for literature and film) as a form of stylistic and generic regulation, both aspirational and exclusionary.

With repertoire, linguistic, and temporal restrictions, this thesis can only be viewed as a starting point for wider discussion of how epic can be a valuable interpretive framework for

the arts beyond its traditional association with literature. The scholarly community cannot ignore the changes that have occurred in uses of the term and its definitional basis: to do so would actually overlook the possibilities for inter-disciplinary analysis and criticism that these wider definitions offer. Literature and film discussed in terms of the epic meta-category do not exist in isolation, and the same applies to music and other arts. The epic interpretive framework offers new insights into many prominent areas of discussion in musicology: from those discussed here, like the hero concept and temporality, to those barely touched upon, including the idea of genius and reception history. One of the most notable ideas that has arisen from this thesis is the importance of understanding epic as a form of regulation as well as an interpretive tool, demonstrating the circularity of the links between high status works and artists. It is perhaps in this capacity that epic has a great deal to offer musicology. But musicology has a lot to offer the epic meta-category too. Music's complex and unstable relationship with text challenges the assumption that epic is always necessarily a textual genre. The complicated nature of musical representation can provide new angles on the previously assumed rigidity of an epic narrative, particularly the quest or hero's journey. In the broadest terms, music is another expression of the epic meta-category's diverse range.

Owing to the number of unanswered questions around epic and music, there is considerable scope for further developing this research. An obvious route to take would be to examine different repertoire, both generic (opera, vocal music, chamber music) and temporal (pre-Wagner, or a smaller time period). Expanding into non-Western or non-English language epics would also be immensely valuable to the wider discussion. Music's role in oral epics, as more frequently noted in ethnomusicological discourse, would be necessary to develop to appreciate the epic meta-category in all of its manifestations. There is also great interest in considering how particular repertoires may be more prolific in examples of engagement with the epic meta-category than others. For instance, three of the case studies in this thesis are

symphonies, so the question could be asked as to whether the symphonic form is particularly suited to the epic meta-category.

Beyond the question of repertoire, however, it is evident that there needs to be a more comprehensive discussion around the significance and complexities of text in or with music when considered in terms of the epic meta-category. The sheer variety of texts with which music has been associated (including lyrics and paratexts) makes these connections highly significant for understanding music-epic interactions. For media that combine text with other expressive forms (like music), there needs to be greater study of the cross-genre dynamic at play in such encounters. In existing discourse on epic in media that are not solely textual, any text present is assumed to have greater expressive power or specificity than the other artistic genres used. Challenging this assumption will be crucial to undermine the persisting critical narrative that epics must be texted.

Although only the Shore case study considers a film score, this thesis has highlighted how filmic terminology, concepts, and expectations have begun to infiltrate the way we perceive music from across the temporal spectrum, regardless of any overt cinematic connections. As a result, it would be very helpful, in order to further work on the epic meta-category and music, to place greater focus on how music and epic film interact and inform our understanding of the wider epic meta-category. The film-music relationship also has considerable importance for the meta-category's continued evolution and definitional shifts into the twenty-first century, which have only been outlined briefly here, so more detail would be preferable for future research. As many filmic epics are adaptations of or inspired by pre-existing literary epics, the use of the cinematic medium as a new expressive form for the epic meta-category can offer a broader model for how music can function in the same way.

The potential avenues for further developing ideas around music and the epic meta-category are endless – the few mentioned here are merely those that have naturally arisen from the methodologies and case studies used. Epic may have a short history thus far in musicology, but it has the potential to be a highly valuable addition to the critical vocabulary.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Tolkien's Invented Languages in *LOTR*

Jackson and Shore make use of many of Tolkien's invented languages and give them strong relationships with place and people. Quenya (high Elvish) is reserved for texts regarding quasi-supernatural power, typically regarding Lothlórien, Isengard, and the Ring's voice. Khuzdûl (Dwarvish) retains its racial association, heard only in Moria. Adûnaic features in texts relating to Sauron's most powerful evil allies, the Black Riders and the Balrog.[897] Old English is used exclusively for the texts related to Rohan, while drinking songs and the Shire-related texts are in English. Sindarin (Low Elvish), by far the most frequently sung Tolkienian language, has no strong identification with place (besides its absence from the Shire). The uses of Khuzdûl and Old English are the least surprising, based on Tolkien's use of them in his novel for the same communities.

Appendix 2: Descriptions of cues from *LOTR*

<u>"The Nazgûl"</u>
The CD track "The Nazgûl" (*Fellowship*) showcases many of Shore's modernist-inspired techniques. The opening minute presents alternating silence and trombone swells, accompanied by celli and bass "growls". Interrupting, the violins' trill between a high B and C suggests fear or a state of heightened anxiety. A tonal centre is virtually unrecognisable, and the harmony is non-functional. In the second minute, a mass of woodwind trills initiate a sudden *tutti* crescendo to *forte*, where busy *tremolo* strings accompany series of brass stabs. The *"The Threat of Mordor"* leitmotif, an ostinato based on a fragment of a downward scale, creates a sense of relentlessness:

[897] Significantly, Black Speech, the language of Mordor (with undeniable racialised overtones), is never sung in Jackson's trilogy.



Figure 20: "The Threat of Mordor" leitmotif

At the forefront of the texture is the chorus's quasi-ritualistic rhythmic pattern based on subtly shifting chord clusters (initially lower voices but the range gradually widens). Suddenly, this section stops before the celli and basses resume their "growls", augmented by the bassoon.

<u>The music of Shelob, "Shelob's Lair" and "Shelob the Great"</u>

We hear Shore's scoring of Shelob before we see the great spider. Shore's music multiplies the tension before Shelob's reveal tenfold by decentring the score: there is no tonal centre, no functional harmony, no leitmotifs, and few familiar orchestral timbres. A series of small *tremolo* string swells are interspersed with silence, which is followed by eerie, dodecaphonic string lines. These are accompanied by a "plodding" bassoon and low strings line that gradually creeps in, the unnatural atmosphere enhanced by string harmonics and glissandi. As Frodo panics, the strings sections take up different, repeated, scalar cells that create a swirling sensation, gradually rising in pitch to reflect Frodo's fear. Between moments of panic, Frodo regrets dismissing Sam, scored with archetypal signifiers of sadness like minor colours, slow tempo, and descending melodic lines. As Frodo fights Shelob, the music becomes increasingly indeterminate and ferocious, with rattles, snare drum, harsh brass mutes, *sul tasto* strings, and grotesque *glissandi*. Shore takes multiple parameters to extremes (particularly pitch and harmony): Shelob's undeniable evil is almost characterised more through noise than "music". Frodo's mid-encounter vision of Galadriel further emphasises Shelob's grotesque scoring through contrast. When Sam arrives and

wounds Shelob, the score becomes less timbrally focused, with a new melodic line based on some small cells with seemingly no leitmotivic connection.[898]

Minas Morgul

A supernatural unnaturalness characterises Minas Morgul, which Shore provides with two contrasting musical qualities in *Return*. The first creates a sinister, uncanny atmosphere using horror-film tropes; the second is terrifying quasi-delirium.[899] The former references one of the trilogy's most prolific leitmotifs, *"The History of the Ring"* (hereafter *"History"*), which, broadly speaking, accompanies significant events (past or present) in the Ring's history, whether initiated by or affecting the Ring or (current) Ringbearer:



Figure 21: "The History of the Ring" leitmotif.

Regarding Minas Morgul, the motif references how the Ring indirectly created the city and its soundworld.[900] The "*History"* motif's characteristic rising semitone forms the basis for the chord clusters (stacking four, occasionally five, semitones) and eerie bass lines in the first half of the Morgul cue.[901] Shore layers sound, dividing the strings (into up to eight parts), using registral extremes and extended performance techniques (including *tremolo* and *sul tasto*), to develop Minas Morgul's unnaturalness, resulting

[898] CD reference: *Return*, "Shelob The Great" c.01:16 for Sam's entry.
[899] CD reference: *Return*, "A Coronal of Silver and Gold" c. 03:17-07:27.
[900] Minas Morgul was originally the Gondorian city Minas Ithil, but the Black Riders took control of the city earlier in the Third Age. As the Ring was responsible for the Kings of Men becoming the Black Riders, it was thus partially responsible for the city changing hands. See: "Minas Morgul", The One Wiki to Rule Them All, available at https://lotr.fandom.com/wiki/Minas_Morgul, accessed 24/03/2019.
[901] Doug Adams claims that the *"History"* motif's rising semitone represents a score-wide intervallic relationship between the semitone and evil – good, conversely, is characterised by whole tones, as seen in the opening notes of the *"Fellowship"* motif. Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 74.

in a climax. A huge ensemble crescendo gradually incorporates a seemingly wordless chorus – language cannot describe the city's horrors – and divides, ending with a mass of noise and a fog-horn like lower brass note. As this fades, the orchestra erupts with the *"The Evil of the Ring"* leitmotif (hereafter *"Evil"*).[902]



Figure 22: "The Evil of the Ring" leitmotif.

Relentlessly accompanied by the *"Descending Thirds"* bass line, the *"Evil"* leitmotif marks the start of bombastic, almost demented orchestral writing. The *"Evil"* leitmotif is played by a jarring, slightly off-key combination of muted brass and rhaita: brass's military associations are embodied by the city's army, while the rhaita's exotic connotations convey a crudely orientalised sense of evil. Fast string and brass trills and wide vibrato at the ends of phrases create an unsettling shuddering effect. In the same cue, drums sound the *"Five-Beat Pattern"*, repurposed from Isengard.[903] Sharing elements like ostinato, pulsing pedals, and prominent semitone motion, Mordor's and Isengard's leitmotifs are musically connected. Up to the point when this cue is heard, Isengard has been a more active antagonist than Mordor, so using the *"Five-Beat Pattern"* for Minas Morgul reflects the similar aims of the two realms. Combining the *"Five-Beat Pattern"* with other leitmotifs suggests a more powerful, multi-faceted evil than that which has come before.

[902] None of material before the *"Evil"* motif is heard during the film. If anything, the lack of music on-screen enhances Minas Morgul's supernatural quality (as the sound design highlights the heavily modified sounds of wind, whispering, and eerie ringing that represent the Ring's power and influence over Frodo).

[903] Notably, Doug Adams lists the *"Five-Beat Pattern"* under the leitmotif collections for both Isengard and Mordor, suggesting co-ownership. Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 93+100.

The Battle at the Black Gate and the Destruction of the Ring

The music of this sequence plays out over the events of two narrative threads, moving backward and forward between them, that are occurring simultaneously: Aragorn leading the battle at the Black Gate, and Frodo and Gollum fighting over the Ring inside Mount Doom. Dominating the sequence is the chorus, evoking the style of the 'Dies Irae' of Verdi's *Requiem* or Orff's *Carmina burana.* Syllabic text-setting and thick, full chords covering the entire vocal range embody the Day of Wrath. The orchestra evokes the earth's movements: continuously rising and falling bass arpeggios, unpredictable and non-functional harmonies, and triplets superimposed on duplets emphasised with accents. As Gollum finally seizes the Ring, soloist Renée Fleming presents a tonally unstable, tragic melody, full of the Ring's characteristic semitone movement. When Frodo re-engages with Gollum, the 'Dies Irae' chorus returns, with the climactic soprano high-B as the two characters fall over the cliff before sound effects and dialogue become more prominent. As the sequence switches to the Black Gate, Adams describes how the chorus and orchestra erupt into the *"The Destruction of the Ring"* leitmotif, a transformation of the earlier *"Fate of the Ring"* leitmotif.[904] Major chords dominate, although the harmony remains non-functional, mirroring Mordor's collapse. As the Fellowship realise that Frodo and Sam may not have survived, the tonal palette reverts to minor colours and the chorus fades away: the community unites around its fear, but this is expressed by the orchestra rather than vocalised.

[904] Doug Adams, *The Music of the Lord of the Rings Films*, p. 344.

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