

# “Music of the Cactus Land”

## A Consideration of Musical Style and Text Setting in Denis ApIvor’s *The Hollow Men*

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*Denis ApIvor’s*<sup>1</sup> choral-orchestral setting of T. S. Eliot’s *The Hollow Men*, completed in 1939, is the most significant achievement of his early musical career and marks an important point of transition in his development as a composer. In its ambitious scale, the work signalled a decisive break with ApIvor’s earlier compositional output, which up until that point had consisted almost entirely of solo songs. Furthermore, as the preliminary attempt at the integration of modernist techniques into his idiom, it provided the basis from which his more radical experiments were to grow. The work is scored for baritone solo, chorus and a small orchestra comprising flute, piccolo, clarinet, bassoon, double bassoon, two E-flat alto saxophones, three trumpets, three trombones, strings, piano, timpani and percussion. It was performed to considerable acclaim in a BBC broadcast concert on 21 February 1950, by the BBC Male Voice Chorus with Redvers Llewellyn (baritone) and the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Constant Lambert.<sup>2</sup>

**A**PIVOR’S DECISION TO SET Eliot’s poem was the result of a combination of factors. In the first place the poem’s bleak imagery and despairing mood, which in some parts strongly echoes *The Waste Land*, aptly mirrored ApIvor’s own changed outlook during the months leading up to outbreak of the Second World War. In his unpublished *Short historical essay* (1988), for example, he states that:

By 1939 the vertiginous rush to world war, the Spanish Civil War, with the death, among others, of Garcia Lorca, had produced such a state of despair, that the composer found himself quite easily turning from the charm and archaism of mediaeval and sixteenth-century texts to Eliot’s most despairing text – *The Hollow Men*.<sup>3</sup>

Like Lorca, whose poems and plays provided inspiration for a number of ApIvor’s works in the 1940s and 1950s, Eliot served to intensify the melancholy side of ApIvor’s musical personality, providing a bleaker, more world-orientated parallel which expressed ‘in concentrated form all the frustration and disillusionment of a generation which had come to doubt the value of moving in any direction, which had lost faith in progress or even living at all’.<sup>4</sup> It is also likely that the poem’s religious tone, with its chant-like stanzas, as well as its central theme of spiritual inadequacy, resonated with ApIvor’s own preoccupations at this time. Most critics agree that *The Hollow Men*

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<sup>1</sup> ApIvor’s dates are 1916-2004.

<sup>2</sup> Critics were unanimous in their approval of the work. See for example, Richard Capell, ‘Music of the Cactus Land’, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 February 1950 and Mosco Carner, ‘New music’, *Time and Tide*, 18 March 1950.

<sup>3</sup> ApIvor, ‘A short historical essay’, 1. The broadcast was recorded by the composer and is available for study in the ApIvor Collection, Special Collections, University of Leeds.

<sup>4</sup> ApIvor, ‘Autobiography’, 54-55.

(1925) reflects Eliot's growing inclination towards Christianity during the 1920s, which culminated in his conversion to the Anglo-Catholic church in 1928, and led to a marked change in poetic outlook with works such as *Ash-Wednesday* (1930). At about this time Eliot had also begun to identify increasingly with the poetry of Dante, which is reflected in *The Hollow Men* by the incorporation of imagery from the *Vita Nuova* (for example, 'the eyes' of Beatrice). The poem also suggests *The Divine Comedy*, in its charting of a spiritual journey from a state of faithlessness to the brink of a commitment to the divine.

ApIvor's own background was characterized by an intensely Anglo-Catholic religious upbringing, which, to a certain extent he had already begun to react against when he arrived in London from Wales during the 1930s. A characteristic of this was his gravitation towards song settings which expressed an apparent religious sincerity while at the same time acknowledging human fallibility, a trait which ApIvor had particularly admired in Warlock's contributions to the *Oxford Book of Carols* (1928):

What these three carols have about them is something which none of the other modern settings in the book possess: an ikon-like quality, a primitivism which is as effective as the religious tenderness of the composer is genuine. But there is no 'po-faced' assumption of godliness. Like a monkish creator of medieval times he makes no serious effort to hide the fact that the love of God is something which may go side by side with human sensibility. Sometimes indeed, beneath the cassock a goat's foot peeps out – there is a pig's head carved upon the roof, and a devil beneath the choir stalls.<sup>5</sup>

Initially this led ApIvor to utilize archaic texts as a stimulus, including miscellaneous poems by Chaucer, the mystic Richard Rolle of Hampole, as well as a number of anonymous lyrics from the *English Galaxy of Shorter Poems* (1936). Some of ApIvor's most notable early settings border on ecstatic in their celebration of the divine, for example, in the short Medieval hymn to the Virgin, *There is no rose of swich vertu* (1937) and *Lully Lullà* (1939) while others deal in a more sober fashion with matters of spiritual transformation, repentance and the problems of sustaining faith, as in his Warlock-indebted setting of the Wedderburn text, *Quho is at my window, quho?* (1938). Towards the end of the 1930s ApIvor began to range more widely in his choices, which included the decadent *fin-de-siècle* Catholic poets Hillaire Belloc and Ernest Dowson<sup>6</sup>, as well as the darkly humorous Romantic poetry of Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-49)<sup>7</sup>, leading the composer to experiment in musical terms on an increasingly broad stylistic canvas. ApIvor's gravitation towards *The Hollow Men* seems a natural outcome of the widening of his literary horizons at this time and Eliot's poem, with its curious combination of religious philosophizing and world-weary cynicism would no doubt have suggested an interesting vehicle for reconciling the various strands of his personality. Another important contributing musical influence, which may have provided inspiration for attempting a large-scale choral setting, was Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* (a Catholic composer's setting of a Catholic text), which ApIvor confessed to have admired greatly during his Hereford days.<sup>8</sup> In its Dante-like depiction of the soul's journey in the afterlife towards the final judgment, Newman's poem does offer a somewhat more optimistic parallel with Eliot's text – *The Hollow Men*, in fact, almost appears as a kind of

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<sup>5</sup> ApIvor, 'Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock): An early influence', 4-5. The carols are *Balulalow*, *Tyrley Tyrlo* and *Adam Lay Ybounden*.

<sup>6</sup> ApIvor's setting of Dowson *Flos Lunae* was inspired by Delius's *Cynara* although it owed a greater musical debt to Busoni and Van Dieren's *Weep You No More Sad Fountains*.

<sup>7</sup> ApIvor set Beddoes's *The Carrion Crow* from *Death's Jest Book* (1850).

<sup>8</sup> ApIvor recalled singing in a performance of this work under Elgar's baton at one of Three Choirs Festivals held between 1928 and 1930.

cynical reworking of the path taken by Gerontius, with a contrastingly ambiguous and unsettling conclusion.

There were also other factors at work during this period which had important repercussions for the stylistic decisions taken by ApIvor in setting the *The Hollow Men*, most notably Constant Lambert and his incisive critique of contemporary musical developments, *Music Ho!* (1934). ApIvor had read and admired this book intensely during his early years in London as a medical student:

What an effect this book had when one first read it! – the encyclopedic knowledge of recent musical developments all over the world, the wit, the social observation and satire, the sensitivity to painting, the experience of ballet from the inside. Here was a musician who was in the best sense of the word a European as well as an Englishman.<sup>9</sup>

In an essay entitled 'The Spirit of Jazz', Lambert discusses the successful fusion of 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' art in Eliot's poetry, identifying the last lines of *The Hollow Men* – 'This is the way the world ends' – with the 'jingle' and 'sentiment' of the jazz song.<sup>10</sup> Lambert also devotes a section of his book to a discussion of 'Symphonic Jazz', in which he suggests that 'the next move in the development of jazz will come, almost inevitably, from the sophisticated or highbrow composers',<sup>11</sup> citing Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* and Milhaud's *La Creation du Monde* as ideal models of the most successful assimilation of jazz traits. It was certainly Lambert's challenge, along with ApIvor's experience of his then highly popular witty concert work, *The Rio Grande* (1927),<sup>12</sup> that led him to explore jazz influences in *The Hollow Men*, most explicitly in Part V.

In commenting upon his approach to setting *The Hollow Men* in 1958, ApIvor also revealed the extent to which he had perceived numerous qualities in the poem which were 'half-way to music':

A remarkable feature which must immediately strike a musician, is the music-like mode of construction employed by the poet. [...] The effect is not impressionistic, as, for instance, are certain parts of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, but the poem employs, deliberately or unconsciously, musical devices - in reality variations on thematic fragments - which form the basis of the art of composition. What a composer does in the way of subtle variation - augmentation, diminution, inversion, echoes, mirror-images and reappearances for dramatic effect - is the method used by Mr. Eliot in his theme of 'death's kingdom'; 'lost kingdoms'; 'death's other kingdom'; 'death's twilight kingdom'; 'death's dream kingdom'; and 'For Thine is the Kingdom'.<sup>13</sup>

Eliot himself developed theories regarding the relationship between poetry and musical composition, and, in examining these ideas, one is struck by their correlation with ApIvor's conception of the 'musical' processes taking place in *The Hollow Men*. In

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Richard Shead, *Constant Lambert* (London: Simon Publications, 1973), 108

<sup>10</sup> Constant Lambert, *Music Ho!* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948), 150-51

<sup>11</sup> Lambert, *Music Ho!*, 166

<sup>12</sup> ApIvor, 'Memories of the Warlock circle', in *Peter Warlock, a Centenary Celebration* (London: Thames, 1994), 189

<sup>13</sup> ApIvor, 'Setting *The Hollow Men* to music', in *T. S. Eliot: A Symposium for his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Neville Braybrooke (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958), 89

ApIvor was by no means alone in his perception of the musicality of Eliot's text. The critic Everett A. Gillis for example, has suggested that the poem resembles a musical 'suite', consisting of a sequence of recitatives (Parts II and III) and choruses (Parts I, IV and V),<sup>13</sup> while Elisabeth Schneider has analysed the poem in terms of its rhythmic structure, concluding that its greatest energy is found in the 'drumbeat' rhythms of its outer movements. See Everett A. Gillis, 'Hope for Eliot's Hollow Men?', *PMLA*, 75 (1960), 635-38 (635) and Elisabeth Schneider, *T. S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet* (London: University of California Press, 1975), 99-107

his essay, 'The Music of Poetry' (1942), Eliot remarked that one of the 'properties in which music concerns the poet most' is the 'sense of structure'. He argued – with reference to the plays of Shakespeare – that 'musical design' exists in poetry in terms of a structure comprising both 'recurrent imagery and dominant imagery'. He also referred to the idea of 'recurrent themes', which 'are as natural to poetry as to music', stating that there are 'possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments.'<sup>14</sup> Within such a structure, the poet, according to Eliot, may employ such musical devices as 'dissonance', as a means of achieving 'transitions between passages of greater and lesser intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole.'<sup>15</sup>

The essentials of the musical language evolved by ApIvor for *The Hollow Men* are encapsulated in the opening bars of the work (Ex. 1). First the trumpet sounds a grotesque parody of the theme of the children's song *Here we go round the mulberry bush* emphasizing the perfect fourth and tritone, as a direct reference to Eliot's appropriation of the latter in the famous lines, 'Here we go round the prickly pear'. This is followed by a sequence of semitones, a minor third, and arpeggios again built from fourths and tritones. From this interval 'set' are derived all the key motives, accompaniment figures and chord structures encountered in the work, some of which have an explicit relationship with ideas developed in the poem. ApIvor indicates in particular that the last three notes of the distorted mulberry bush theme (B-F sharp-C, which form a quartal structure) 'accompany throughout the idea of the "falling shadow" and the "fading star"'.<sup>16</sup> In a more general sense the unique character this material, which frequently gives rise to an atonal environment, provides a suitably astringent counterpart to the poem's tone of despair.



Ex. 1 *The Hollow Men*, interval set

The work's 72 bar orchestral introduction, parts of which are shown in Ex. 2, serves to evoke the landscape within which the hollow men find themselves at the start of the poem, and illustrates a number of facets of ApIvor's musical style. As can be seen, the passage of two-part counterpoint on saxophone and alternating flute/clarinet (bars 11-15) is derived from the characteristic intervals of the opening set. Bars 22-33 are founded on an ostinato pattern (reminiscent of 'The sing aloud to God our strength' music of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*<sup>17</sup>), a device employed frequently in *The Hollow Men*, and extensively in ApIvor's music of the 1940s and 50s. The prolonged timpani F appears to function as a kind of tritonal 'dominant' preparation, confirmed in bar 29 (Ex. 2c), when it is felt to resolve to B, again a typical harmonic gesture in the work. A series of parallel seventh chords in the brass follows this, suggesting a jazz reference, or perhaps the influence of Delius or Warlock, and a second point of climax occurs in bar 34 on a sustained chord (Ex. 2d), which confirms earlier suggestions of a formal pitch

<sup>14</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry' in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 38

<sup>15</sup> Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry', 32

<sup>16</sup> ApIvor, 'Setting *The Hollow Men* to music', 90

<sup>17</sup> William Walton, *Belshazzar's Feast* (vocal score), rev. edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 70. ApIvor had certainly heard this work by the time of the composition of *The Hollow Men* although maintained that he was never impressed by it.

scheme centred on B. This structure, which comprises B-F-B-D sharp-G-B-D sharp-F sharp, is a distillation of ApIvor's conception of harmony in the work – essentially it is intended to function as a B major triad, to which are added the 'foreign' pitches F and G, in effect modifying the structure by encroaching upon the territory of the perfect fifth (F sharp). The result is a blurring, or perhaps more appropriately in this poetic context, corruption, of the overall tonal outline. Thus, although triadic implications are apparent here, and at many other points throughout the work, ApIvor rarely allows his chords to take on purely tonal identities.

(a) Two-part counterpoint (bars 11-15)

(b) Hemiolias (bars 21-24)

(c) Hemiolias and parallel seventh chords (bars 29-33)

(d) Climactic chord (bars 34-35)

Ex. 2 *The Hollow Men*, Part I, Bars 11-15, 21-24, 29-33, 34-35

ApIvor's setting of the opening lines of the poem (Ex. 3) provides an apt musical reflection of the condition of the hollow men. The exposed B-F sharp dyad (another echo of *Belshazzar's Feast*) is appropriately suggestive of spiritual emptiness, while the manner of its monotonous chanting evokes church ritual and plainsong. In addition, the rhythmic unison between the parts suggests both conformity and lack of individuality, while the jazz-derived syncopation between the words 'hollow' and 'men', conveys the difficulty in speaking engendered by a dilapidated physical condition. A similar mock-

liturgical treatment (in ApIvor's words, representing the 'litany of frustration'<sup>18</sup>), is employed for the words 'Shape without form, shade without colour' (this time accompanied by descending chords in parallel motion), and also revisited in Part V with the recurrent line 'Falls The Shadow'. At bar 82 (Ex. 4), ApIvor employs what he refers to as 'small-interval' harmony to provide vivid illustration of the 'dried voices' whispering together.<sup>19</sup> Rhythmically the influence of jazz (most likely derived from Lambert's *Rio Grande*) is discernible in the syncopated, dance-like character of the new figure introduced by the strings, which becomes more significant as the work progresses:

Ex. 3 *The Hollow Men*, Part I, Bars 73-76

Ex. 4 *The Hollow Men*, Part I, Bars 82-84

The overarching harmonic structure of *The Hollow Men* is based upon an intricate scheme of quasi-tonal 'regions', within which particular pitches, or groups of pitches, are brought to the fore and gain significance as points of aural reference. These regions are not achieved by traditional modulation, rather they become emphasized at certain points by means of pedal, ostinato figures, or *faux* tonic-dominant style reiteration. A reduction of the scheme employed in Part I is shown in Ex. 5, with reference to the respective passages of text with which they are associated. Semibreves indicate the most significant centres, while minims represent those pitches which are also prominent but of lesser structural weight. Pitches deemed to have a leading note or dominant-like function are shown joined to their respective 'tonics' by plain slurs while dotted slurs

<sup>18</sup> ApIvor, 'Setting *The Hollow Men* to music', 90

<sup>19</sup> Experiments had already begun with this technique in ApIvor's song *The Carrion Crow* of the same year.

indicate pitches with an overriding significance during a particular section. Hence B is the most predominant pole of the introduction, and indeed may be viewed as the central pitch of the movement as a whole, while A and D gain prominence in the choral/orchestral section.

Ex. 5 *The Hollow Men*, Part I, polar reduction

In Part II there is a foregrounding of the pitches D and E flat, which also appears to have a symbolic function relative to the 'recurrent' imagery of the poem (Ex. 6):

Ex. 6 *The Hollow Men*, Part II, polar reduction

Aplvor's song settings of the mid-1930s - particularly *Alceste* (Chaucer), *There is no rose of swich vertu*, *Quho is at my window*, *quho* and *Lully Lullày* - already demonstrate a preoccupation with 'Neapolitan' - i.e. semitonally distinguished - tonal relationships, and, in particular, with the symbolism of D and E flat relative to the poetic subject matter. In Aplvor's religious settings, tonal centres based on these pitches are often introduced to suggest commitment to the divine and the achievement of a higher 'spiritual' level, or alternatively they accompany moments of vacillation, doubt and weakness. In *The Hollow Men*, by an interesting poetic parallel, Eliot develops the symbolism of the two kingdoms - the escapist 'death's dream kingdom' where the hollow men exist in a kind of non-committal limbo, contrasted with apprehension at the idea of the final 'twilight kingdom', in which 'the eyes' threaten divine judgment. Given Aplvor's aforementioned highlighting of the 'musical' processes already at work in Eliot's uses of the 'kingdom' motif in the poem, it is of no surprise to find him responding to this in terms his previous 'tonal' strategies. In Part I the pitch D already appears resolutely in association with the word 'kingdom', particularly in bars 102-05 when strong tonic-dominant movement underpins the word at the end of the line 'Those who have crossed with direct eyes to death's other kingdom'. In Part II, Aplvor's music, aided by the sliding chromaticism of the melodic and harmonic writing (which the composer acknowledges to be an influence of 'blues harmony'<sup>20</sup>) veers ambiguously between suggestions of D and E flat as the poet hedges between the two visions (Ex. 7):

<sup>20</sup> Aplvor, 'Setting *The Hollow Men* to music', 90

117 *Con moto*

121 *f*

me<sup>t</sup> in dream<sup>s</sup> in death's dream king - dom These do not ap - pear.

Ex. 7 *The Hollow Men*, Part II, Bars 117-24

E flat gains greater prominence between bars 125-136, which would seem to fit with the references to 'death's dream kingdom' at this point. ApIvor also introduces jazzy chromatic string chords in this section, which engender an impressionistic, dream-like stasis, effectively mirroring the imagined romantic vision of an alternative afterlife. Greater resolve is eventually expressed by actual resolution to D, as in bar 145 when the music again underpins 'kingdom' with a chord of D major and the syllables of the word themselves are set to E flat-D. Further examples later in the poem seem to further confirm ApIvor's approach – for example in the final section of Part IV, (bars 210-219), which finds the hollow men at the 'tumid river', an E flat pedal accompanies the speaker's acknowledgement that the hollow men will remain 'Sightless unless/The Eyes reappear [...] and that 'death's twilight kingdom' is 'The hope only/Of empty men'.

*The Hollow Men* also contains notable instances of experimentation with musical form and texture, serving to further enhance the imagery of the poem as well as reflecting the latter's own somewhat disparate structure. In Part III, for example, ApIvor offers a striking depiction of Eliot's 'dead land' through the juxtaposition of three distinct musical entities (reduced outline shown in Ex. 8). The movement's bedrock is the syncopated F pedal, played throughout by the low strings and timpani, offering an apt musical metaphor for the flat, featureless desert. Above this, the muted violins, violas and cellos outline a chordal palindrome which ascends in pitch, reaching its apex on the first beat of bar 170. Sandwiched in between these elements is the solitary baritone (the speaker).

Palindrome:

Baritone (melodic structure):

F pedal on (Basses and Timp.)

climax on 'star'

'death's other kingdom'

D 'region'

E $\flat$  'region'

D 'region'

climax on 'hand'

'tenderness'

Ex. 8 *The Hollow Men*, Part III, reduction

The impression here is that the baritone weakly aspires to match the palindrome's heavenly ascent but ultimately falls a long way short. His first lines, 'This is the dead land', are sung monotonously to short fragmented phrases on F (i.e. situated firmly on the desert plane). As the movement progresses the vocal part brings into focus the now familiar regions of D (at 'dead man's hand') and E flat (at 'fading star'), the achievement of the latter being marked by the swift descent of the baritone, almost to the pitch level at which he began. For the remainder of the movement, the baritone remains within a D area, the Lydian inflection in bar 176 lending poignancy to the poet's 'trembling with tenderness'. It is worth noting that the first (and therefore last) five chords of palindrome contain verticalized versions of the quartal structure outlined by the last three pitches of the introductory 'mulberry bush' theme, and these, as ApIvor has indicated, are intended to refer to the idea of the 'stone images' introduced in this part of the poem.<sup>21</sup> The climax of the palindrome coincides with the word 'star' and is harmonized with an E flat (notated D sharp) minor chord, whose structure is disturbed by the presence of the pitch A (another instance of ApIvor's propensity to obscure the fifth).

The remarkable concluding orchestral chord (Ex. 9) comprises nine different pitches (only G, C and C sharp are absent) and provides one of the most arresting sonorities of the entire work. Clearly its purpose is to suggest the degree to which the despair of the hollow men has increased since the outset of the poem.

W. wind

Strings

Strings

Brass

Ex. 9 *The Hollow Men*, Part III, Bars 181-91, orchestral chord

<sup>21</sup> ApIvor, 'Setting *The Hollow Men* to music', 90

Part V contains by far the most ambitious and remarkable formal construction of the work. The first section comprises a series of self-contained episodes, commencing with an orchestral introduction (Ex. 10) reprising the main musical ideas heard in the preceding movements (Bartokian quartal ostinato figures, small interval harmony and syncopated rhythmic patterns):

220 **Allegro vivace** Fl.

Cymb.

Timp.

mp sim.

223

Bans, Vol (pizz.), D.B.

p

Tpts

Ex. 10 *The Hollow Men*, Part V, Bars 220-24

The introduction is followed by the first episode (Ex. 11), a rendition on brass of Luther's chorale melody *Ein' Feste Burg ist unser Gott*, irreverently accompanied by a jazz-flavoured piano part outlining a 'pop' I-ii-V sequence in E flat:

231 Tbn

mp

Solo piano (doubled by winds and strings)

f

Ex. 11 *The Hollow Men*, Part V, Bars 232-35

ApIvor's use and treatment of the chorale here is intriguing and it is worth speculating on its 'extra-musical' purpose. Previous uses of *Ein' Feste Burg* have typically occurred in a religious context as seen for example in Mendelssohn's adaptation of hymn for Protestant purposes in the final movement of his *Reformation Symphony* (1830) and Meyebeer's use of it in *Les Huguenots* (1836). By contrast a more nationalistic adaptation of the chorale is found in Wagner's *Kaisermarsch* (1871), written to cater for the jingoism which swept Germany in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war. More recent examples include Debussy's *En blanc et noir* (1915) and, more significantly in regard to ApIvor, Busoni's opera *Doktor Faust* (1924), where, once again, the chorale is used for the reason of its association with Protestantism. In one of the opera's most

remarkable passages (Second Tableau, Fig. 31), an argument breaks out in a tavern between students of Catholic and Protestant allegiance. The music which ensues comprises a series of comments in Latin from the Catholic faction which are superimposed with phrases of *Ein' Feste Burg* from the Protestant camp.<sup>22</sup>

Aplvor heard the first British concert performance of *Doktor Faust* in London in 1937, when it was conducted by Adrian Boult at the Queen's Hall<sup>23</sup> and also possessed a copy of the score at this time.<sup>24</sup> Although Busoni's use of the chorale clearly appears to have been motivated by religious rather than nationalist ideas, one particular detail in the tavern scene suggests that Aplvor took an altogether different inspiration from the work. As the argument between the two opposing religious factions draws to a close, the intolerant Protestant students are instructed by Busoni to leave the stage by marching to a goose-step with their right arms raised.<sup>25</sup> As Busoni died before completing the opera in 1924, he could not have intended this gesture to refer to the Nazi salute. To Aplvor however, setting *The Hollow Men* in 1939, this action would no doubt have seemed eerily prophetic.

The words of the chorale themselves, although not used in the setting, also resonate here. In particular, the first verse of the hymn (in its most popular English translation), with its Hitlerian 'ancient prince of hell' seems to vividly encapsulate political the circumstances of Europe during the late 1930s:

A safe stronghold our God is still,  
A trusty shield and weapon;  
He'll keep us clear from all the ill  
That hath us now o'er taken.  
The ancient prince of hell  
Hath risen with purpose fell;  
Strong mail of craft and power  
He weareth in this hour;  
On earth is not his fellow.<sup>26</sup>

The next episode consists of a rendition by the chorus of 'Here we go round the prickly pear', cynically recited, according to Aplvor's instruction in 'a high pitched rather nasal voice'. It is at this point that the distorted version of the 'mulberry bush' motif returns, this time played by the orchestra, whose initially sparse texture is gradually increased, culminating in a full orchestral statement of the theme in an over-the-top harmonization by Peter Warlock. Aplvor refers to this as the 'dominating dramatic device' whose 'effect is heightened by music so that it seems as if the whole poem and its setting both derive from it and lead up to it'.<sup>27</sup> The Warlock fragment (Ex. 12) is taken from a boisterous drinking song entitled *Roister Doister* (1924) which employs the tune in its penultimate verse.<sup>28</sup> Warlock employs a somewhat excessive chromaticism to obscure the conventional harmonic implications of the melody with only occasional clarification of

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<sup>22</sup> Ferruccio Busoni, *Doktor Faust*, comp. by Philipp Jarnach, vocal score (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1954), 220-27

<sup>23</sup> Aplvor, 'A Short Historical Essay', 1. The opera was not staged in Britain until 1986.

<sup>24</sup> Confirmed in 'Autobiography', 196

<sup>25</sup> Busoni, *Doktor Faust*, 227 (*Die Protestanten gehen, im Gänsemarsch entrüstet ab, mit hochgehobener Hand*)

<sup>26</sup> Maurice Frost (ed.), *Historical Companion to Hymns Ancient and Modern* (London: The Proprietors of Hymns Ancient and Modern, 1962), 245

<sup>27</sup> Aplvor, 'Setting *The Hollow Men* to music', 90

<sup>28</sup> Peter Warlock, *Roister Doister* in *Peterisms Set 2* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 34-37

tonal outline, an approach which has a close affinity with ApIvor's harmonic language throughout the work.

Peter Warlock, 'Roister Doister' (Bars 39-46)  
(Rumbustiously)

When we shall make our wed - ding feast, When we shall make our wed - ding feast,  
There shall be cheer for man and beast; I mun be mar - ried a Sun - day.

ApIvor, *The Hollow Men*, Part V (Bars 257-258)

Tenors  
Sung in a high pitched rather nasal voice Here we go round the prick - ly pear prick - ly pear  
Basses  
Here we go round the prick - ly pear Prick - ly pear prick - ly pear  
Brass and winds

Ex. 12 *The Hollow Men*, Part V, Warlock *Roister Doister* harmonization

In the final section of the work (from bar 265) there is an arresting change of mood, marked by a return to the liturgical style of Part I, and its accompanying B-centred polarity. Each of the three prayer-like stanzas is solemnly declaimed by the chorus to a short fragment of monotonous chant, concluding each time with an identical melodic response 'Falls the Shadow', accompanied by descending bare octaves in the strings (Ex. 13).

Ex. 13 *The Hollow Men*, Part V, Bars 269-74

Initially the accompaniment remains fairly static, but as the chorus reaches the final stanza, the series of slow moving, descending parallel chords, which earlier accompanied the 'litany of frustration', creates momentum (the superimposed fifths, giving rise to seventh chord structures, recall the music of death's dream kingdom in Part II). Interjections by the baritone between the stanzas are characterized by an attempt to resist the downward motion of the chorus and its accompaniment. The first of these – 'For Thine is the Kingdom' – attempts to rise above the chorus with a short fragment of melody, achieving D, once again at the word 'Kingdom'. In the second stanza, 'Between the conception and the creation', the interjection 'Life is very long' is spoken rather than sung and for the final interjection the baritone sings the previous fragment transposed down by a semitone. The short fragmentary phrases that follow render effectively the internal struggle taking place at this point in the poem: 'For Thine is' finds the original fragment on G cut short, while 'For Thine is the' is sung to the lowest pitch allocated so far to the baritone part.

In the final bars the music vividly depicts the petering-out of the existence of the hollow men. The syncopated rhythmic figure returns momentarily, as if to suggest a failing heartbeat and then for the remaining bars, the higher strings sustain a dyad comprising D-A, against which are juxtaposed the distorted 'mulberry bush' tune and the chromatic bassoon motives heard at the beginning of the work. An arpeggio motif derived from the former is outlined by the basses, moving through D-A-E flat, with the last pitch sounding only for a crotchet beat before D is regained and then held in the next bar. Appropriately, the last stanza of the poem, 'This is the way the world ends/Not with a bang but a whimper' is spoken against a short wisp of flute melody, the implication being that to sing at this point would require too much energy. It seems that the work

will end within a D region. However, once the final D minor triad has been sounded in the strings, ApIvor introduces an E flat in the flute, followed by D and then A in the timpani, pitches which have arisen from the quartal arpeggio heard only moments earlier. The expectation of a return to D, implied by tonic-dominant implication of this grouping is not fulfilled – instead A is the last pitch heard and one is left with the impression that a release from the predicament of the hollow men may not after all have been attained. Once heard, a more apt musical interpretation of this final section of the poem is difficult to imagine.

In his review of the work's first broadcast performance of *The Hollow Men* in 1950, Colin Mason remarked that:

The greater significance of the work seems to me to lie in the evidence it offers that the composer has really profited by the example of the 'great' composers of the early twentieth century, particularly Stravinsky. This is true of so few modern English composers that it puts Denis ApIvor among the very few who are likely, when their mature works can be heard, to earn themselves a lasting international reputation.<sup>29</sup>

*The Hollow Men* shows ApIvor in a mode of fervent experimentation, as he worked to assimilate the various musical influences he had been exposed to since his arrival in London as a young medical student in 1934. Stylistically he was at a crossroads: composers such as Stravinsky, Bartok and Busoni had all begun to have a profound effect, as had the 'outsider' British music of Peter Warlock, Van Dieren and Delius before this. Eliot's text, with its highly charged imagery and structural ambiguity appears to have offered a potent vehicle for ApIvor to indulge these various musical interests in a single sitting. What one observes particularly in *The Hollow Men* is ApIvor extending his grasp of form while loosening his harmonic language from its tonal moorings as new structures are assimilated. The employment of a central interval 'set' in this work, with its leitmotivic function, as well as the use of the palindrome in part III, points towards ApIvor's manner of employing serial techniques prior to 1960, while the reliance on ostinati to root the music in a quasi-tonal fashion, anticipates the expressionistic ballet music of the 1950s. ApIvor was to return to Eliot on a number of further occasions during his career, most notably with his serially conceived setting of *Landscapes* (1950) and then, post his late adoption of 'faith minimalist' tendencies in the 1990s, *Ash-Wednesday* (1994). In this late period there also appeared settings of miscellaneous short texts whose imagery in some cases revisits that of *The Hollow Men* ('Eyes that last I saw in tears' and 'The wind sprang up at four o'clock'). While certainly leading ApIvor to create appealing and imaginative music, none of these later settings gives rise to a comparable attitude to the exploration of musical possibilities that one finds in *The Hollow Men*.

Mark Marrington

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<sup>29</sup> Colin Mason, 'London Contemporary Music Centre', *Musical Times*, 91 (1950), 110-11 (110)