METHODS OF PLACE PORTRAYAL IN THE MUSIC OF CHARLES E. IVES

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ABSTRACT

An exploration of several musical techniques employed by Charles Ives in his compositional portrayals dedicated to American locations.

Chapter 1: "Remembrance" and *The Pond*

Chapter 2: *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*

Chapter 3: *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*

Chapter 4: "The Alcotts"

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By the late nineteenth century, the survival of the prodigious Civil War and the resulting industrial boom was throttling the United States into status as a world power; however, there remained an unsettling inferiority complex within the realm of American musical academia. Europe was ever hailed the victor of classical music. America's finest composers and performers were expected to "complete" their studies with a capstone stint in Berlin, Vienna, or Paris. But in 1880s rural Connecticut, as the Second New England School of composers made fledgling attempts to answer the question of the "American sound," a youngster practiced his marching band drum music by banging on the piano. What composer—American or European—could write music that would challenge and continue the innovations of Beethoven and Brahms? This boy attended Yale University, where he basked in the masculinity of athletics and fraternity life. Who would dare to rip the tenets of harmony and rhythm from their gilded museums and reconstruct them in ways the world had never heard? This young man went on to marry a woman named Harmony, and became one of the most successful businessmen in New York City. Who would dare to deem "some of Chopin" as "pretty soft, but you don't mind it in him so much, because one just naturally thinks of him with a skirt on, but one which he made himself"? This New Yorker developed a cynicism that drove him to social reclusion; the isolation prompted him to generate his most important compositions. Charles Edward Ives was born on October 20, 1874, and his aesthetic and compositional approaches are among the most important innovations to classical music.

Ives was not afraid to tread alone into the unknown. Loneliness was a central character in his relationship with music. Until his final years, his music was neither celebrated nor understood by the majority of musicians. Two of his largest works, the *114 Songs* and the *Concord Sonata*

were initially self-published. During his bachelor years, he was insecure about his musical experiments, frequently passing them off to his roommates as "jokes." At Yale, his composition teacher was bewildered by his sketches. As a teenager, he shocked church congregations by peppering his Sunday organ playing with bizarre harmonies. As a child, he felt embarrassed by his desire to remain indoors and practice piano all day. The isolation worried him at times, causing him to think: "I'm the only one, with the exception of Mrs. Ives…who likes any of my music, except perhaps the some of the older and more or less conventional things…Are my ears on wrong? No one else seems to hear it in the same way."[1]

For many reasons, Ives's isolation was his liberty. Ives chose not to make composing his métier, and thus could afford to keep his compositions free of commercial compromise. In chapter four of this study, there is a discussion of the numerous parallels between Ives and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). Both Ives and Beethoven grew increasingly reclusive with age. Beethoven's deafness isolated him from the conventional music of the day, and this allowed him to compose truly novel music. Audiences and musicians were bewildered by the unprecedented sounds and techniques in his late string quartets. For Ives, his choleric disdain for attending conventional concerts, listening to the radio, and the academic musical establishment created for him a similar sort of deafness from the music of his contemporaries. The music from Beethoven's final phase (1814-1827) baffled audiences with its unprecedented technical demands, and it was occasionally dismissed by unworthy performers and listeners as being the inane ramblings of a disheveled recluse. For most of his career, Ives's music was met with a similar reception.

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[1] Ives, *Memos*, 71.

As their professions confined them to noisy urban centers, both Beethoven and Ives cherished the divine communion that retreats into nature provided. Ives had an indefatigable adoration for the New England countryside, and he was compelled to compose several musical landscapes depicting its beauty. Although Ives was not a particularly religious man, he was deeply spiritual and resonated with in the writings of the New England Transcendentalists. He communicated his profound reverence for the American natural world by incorporating hymn tunes into many of his musical portraits. In fact, these hymn tune quotations, as well as the influence of American popular and marching band music, are among the primary reasons for Ives's distinctly American sound.

Ives wrote many compositions with the intent of capturing an aural impression of the places he loved. While he is certainly not the only composer to depict physical locations, his approach to the task seems particularly successful. This study will examine four portrayals of place in four chapters: first, in two versions of a place associated with his father *The Pond* and "Remembrance"; second, an evocation of the busy city *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*; third, two versions of his cherished New England countryside *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*; fourth, a portrait of domestic life and a shrine to the transcendentalists in the third movement of the *Concord Sonata*. In each of these four pieces, Ives successfully portrays a vibrant "substance" of place through his innovative use of musical "manner."

In his discussion of Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Essays before a Sonata* (the companion writings for the *Concord Sonata*), Ives defines these two terms, "substance" and "manner," and they are essential for an understanding of his aesthetic intentions, especially with regards to place portrayal: "it seems that so close a relation exists between his content and expression, his substance and manner, that if he were more definite in the latter he would lose power in the

former."[2] Thus, "manner" is defined as the musical techniques he used in his compositions. He experimented with "manner" throughout his career, and he frequently used interesting combinations of different approaches in his portrayals of place. Harmonic murkiness is among Ives's favorite tools of "manner," and he writes of this musical characteristic in the *Essays before a Sonata*: "Some accuse Brahms' orchestration of being muddy…[but] A clearer scoring might have lowered the thought… Vagueness, is at times, an indication of nearness to a perfect truth."[3]

In addition to analyzing Ives's "manner," this study also explore the extramusical impressions—or, "substance"—that his compositions display to the listener. As "substance" may be understood as the goal or message of the piece, its identification is precarious. Although Ives suggested specific programmatic contexts for some of his compositions, he preferred to leave the "substance" open to interpretation. As mentioned in the quote above, Ives seems to value a certain ambiguity in his "manner" that keeps his "substance" open-ended. In the *Essays before a Sonata*, he implores listeners to focus more on "manner" than an identification of "substance," as "A devotion to an end tends to undervalue the means"[4]; however, this study attempts to identify the most appropriate explanations of "substance" in each of the compositions explored. This is possible by taking into account (1) Ives's writings on each composition, (2) a study of his "manner," and (3) a visit to the places he portrays. In order to enhance my understanding each composition's "substance," I journeyed throughout New England and listened to Ives's music at the sites which inspired him.

In each chapter, biographical context will be provided in order to elucidate the frame of mind in which Ives wrote these compositions. The genesis and evolution of each piece will be

[2] Ives, *Essays before a Sonata*, 127.
[3] Ives, *Ibid.*, 119.
[4] Ives, *Ibid.*, 119.

explained, and then Ives's techniques of place portrayal will be identified through musical examination. The technical analysis will focus on elements of melody, musical quotation, harmony, dissonance, rhythmic experimentation, texture, and instrumentation. Ives accompanied many of his compositions with programmatic contexts and/or explanations in his *Memos*, and the exploration of these materials is crucial to an understanding of his place portrayal. Each chapter also includes a reminiscence of my personal encounters in each of the places Ives selected to portray.

Chapter One: "Remembrance" and *The Pond*

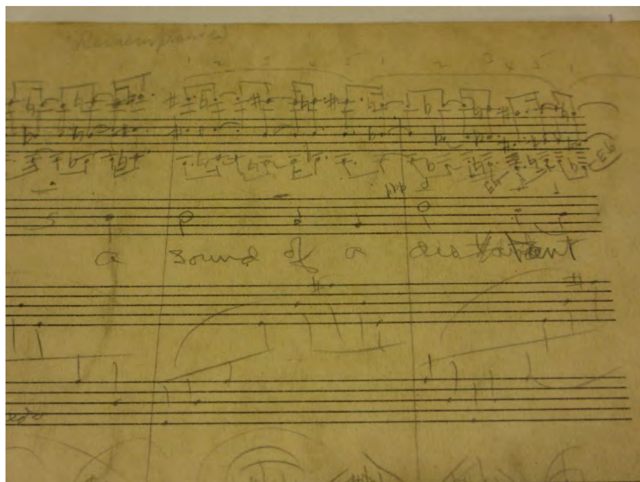

Figure 1.1 Ives manuscript for "Remembrance," Ives Collection at Yale University

Ives spent his life in locations central to his American identity, among them being: his birthplace in the small New England town of Danbury, CT, his college city of New Haven, CT, his workplace in the metropolis of Manhattan, and his retirement retreat in rural West Redding, CT. His personal investment in such antipodean urban and rural dwellings had substantial impact on Ives's identity and music. A transcendentalist at heart, Ives made retreats from his day job as

an insurance salesman in Manhattan to visit small towns throughout New England. In these frequent trips, Ives was seeking to return to the New England culture in which he was raised.

Like many other New England towns in the nineteenth century, Danbury maintained an amateur military band that would play for parades, park concerts, and public ceremonies. The popularity of band music in America during Ives's boyhood was fueled by a widespread familiarity with rousing wartime songs and the subsequent body of works from the postwar period. As Danbury's primary bandleader, Charles's father George Edward Ives (1845-1894) was the heart of all secular musical activity in the town. He was also a veteran of the Civil War. George entered the war in the summer of 1863, and, at the age of eighteen, he was the youngest bandmaster in the Union army.[5] The extent to which George saw battle action is unclear, but he was not formally commended for any heroic acts. In fact, most of the scant military documentation discussing George Ives concerns his arrest. About a year into service, the young George requested discharge as the bandmaster and broke his cornet; the incident resulted in a few days' imprisonment, fines, and furlough, during which he "slipped on ice" but a few weeks before the surrender at Appomattox.[6] Whether George's motivations were of cowardice or frustration remains unknown. A combination of boyhood naivety and a mutual love of music contributed to Ives's lifelong idolization of George.

During his childhood, Charles's values were similar to many New England boys of the late nineteenth century: loyalty to church, family, and baseball. A boy who felt guilty about wanting to stay inside to play piano all day was frustrated by an unknown genius beginning to manifest: "partially ashamed of it—and entirely wrong attitude, but it was strong…when other boys, Monday A.M. on vacation, were out driving grocery carts, or doing chores, or playing ball,

[5] Feder, *Father*, 121.
[6] *Ibid.*, 41.

I felt all wrong to stay in and play piano."[7] Fortunately, his father worked in band music, which may represent the more athletic and masculine characteristics of music as opposed to the less rugged and perhaps more feminine sounds of parlor songs (Feder, Father, 119). The obsessive disdain for "sissy" music, as Ives terms much of the classical repertoire and concert culture, is also a result of Ives's small-town American upbringing. Like the majority of Americans in the nineteenth century, the Ives did not have sufficient time, resources, or interest to make trips to New York or other cities to see the symphony. Such sojourns were later chided by Ives in *Essays before a Sonata*: "Thoreau was a great musician, not because he played the flute but because he did not have to go to Boston to hear 'the Symphony.'"[8]

The need for exposure to classical repertoire was fulfilled by his father's lessons. George instilled in the young Ives an imperative not only to play piano, but also to think creatively about music. In addition to facilitating his son's childhood exposure to music, George's invaluable contribution to the whole of music history was his encouragement for Charlie to wrestle with music's fundamentals instead of robotically learning pieces. Ives writes of this in his *Memos*:

> Besides starting my music lessons when I was five years old, and keeping me at music in many ways until he died, with the best teaching that a boy could have, Father knew (and filled me up with) Bach and the best of the classical music, and the study of harmony and counterpoint etc., and musical history. Above all this, he kept my interest and encouraged open-mindedness in all matter that needed it in any way.[9]

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[7] *Memos*, 130-131.
[8] *Essays before a Sonata*, 139.
[9] *Memos*, 115

An upbringing that consisted of cherished music in the privacy of home, hidden from his social network of baseball-playing New England boys, fundamentally bifurcated Ives the public man and Ives the musician.

Along with self-consciousness about his boyhood obsession with music, and his consequential compensation through machismo, are many other factors for Ives's bizarre aversion toward much of classical music. Perhaps the primary factor was his own father's admonition against pursuing music as a career. George, like many American musicians, could not make a living strictly as the town bandleader. He resorted to taking a job as a clerk in the bank his father founded in order to help pay for his son's education, and thus the teenage Charlie recognized that a career in music would be insufficient if he was to respectably support a family.[10] In defending his decision to work in business over music, Ives writes: "Father felt that a man could keep his music-interest stronger, cleaner, bigger, and freer, if he didn't try to make a living out of it…if he has a nice wife and some children, how can he let the children starve on his dissonances…"[11] Then comes Ives's retrospective rationalization of his father's decisions: "So he has to weaken (and as a man he should weaken for his children), but his music (some of it) more than weakens—it goes 'ta ta' for money—bad for him, bad for music, but good for his boys!!"[12]

On November 4, 1894, just weeks after the start of Charles's freshman year at Yale University, George suffered a fatal stroke. After George passed into death, the man who had been humbled by his pursuit of music was deified in his son's eyes. The evidence of Ives's relentless praise for his father pervades his writings and the collected comments from those close

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[10] Feder, *Father*, 121.
[11] *Memos*, 131.
[12] *Ibid.*, 131.

to him. The grieving process seems to have been abbreviated, if not primarily repressed, by the freshman Ives. The young man battling the stresses of his first undergraduate year and trying to formulate his identity within the liberal arts educational system was faced with the unexpected loss of his most revered hero. On some level, Ives must have felt an imperative to fulfill his father's wishes to not pursue music as a career; on the other hand, he must have felt a desire to brandish the impact that his father's musical lessons had on him and continue his spirit of experimentation.

There is perhaps no more transparent an expression of grief for his father than the brief orchestral work *The Pond* which was later adapted into "Remembrance" (number twelve in the *114 Songs*). As programmatic text to the orchestral score and lyrics to the song are Ives's own words: "A sound of a distant horn / O'er shadowed lake is born / My father's song." *The Pond*, scored for voice, flute, harp, celesta (or harp), piano, and string orchestra, was likely composed circa 1906 with revisions in 1912, however the manuscript sources lack specific dating.[13] Stuart Feder makes a critical conjecture concerning the date and place of *The Pond*'s composition:

> At Pine Mountain in the autumn of 1904, probably around the anniversary of George's death, Ives had an idea for a piece he called 'An Autumn Landscape from Pine Mt. 1904. Strings, woodwind, Cornet (muted) is heard from Ridgebury.' (Feder cites Kirkpatrick, 42). Although Ives put the work on one of his several lists of compositions, no music has ever been found. The idea of the sound of a muted cornet wafting through the air from westerly Ridgebury suggests that this was an early version of *The Pond* (1906) (Feder cites Kirkpatrick, 42)…[14]

[13] Sinclair, 111.
[14] Feder, *Father*, 181-182.

At the top of the orchestral score and in lieu of a title name in the *114 Songs* is the superscript: "The music in my heart I bore | Long after it was heard no more." These are the two concluding lines from William Wordsworth's (1770-1850) poem *The Solitary Reaper*. There is no question that this poetry is Ives's dedication of *The Pond* and "Remembrance" to his father. In the following chapter, we will consider both the orchestral and song versions. As such, it is easier to examine the form and harmony of the orchestral version through an examination of the song version.

There is a powerful succinctness of grief in this nine-measure miniature. The vocal melody consists of three phrases. The first phrase—in G major—starting on B, contains a descending step-wise figure, an upward leap by a fifth, and a descending figure that ends with a long note on the fifth degree of the dominant D major chord. The second phrase is a sequence of the first and ends on the mediant B with which the voice began singing. The third phrase is but two notes whispered at pianissimo, an upbeat on G followed by two accented A notes and a sustained A that melts away with a decrescendo. An octave above the vocal melody is a canon at one measure's distance, but without the upbeat, in the right hand of the piano, marked pianissimo (see Musical Example 1.1). This use of canon creates a beautiful echo effect, which Ives notated himself on a memo: "There is an 'echo' effect."[15] On the heading of a pencil sketch of *The Pond*, he scribbled "ECHO Piece!!!"[16] There is a sense of irresolution created by this echo effect in measure seven, as the second canon does not resolve to the B like the first half of the canon. Ives's emphasis on echoing seems to capture the sonic delay in a scene described by Ives's title: "An Autumn Landscape from Pine Mt. 1904. Strings, woodwind, Cornet (muted) is heard from Ridgebury."

[15] Sinclair, 72.
[16] *Ibid.*, 111.

Musical Example 1.1. Ives, "Remembrance," mm. 1-4, *114 Songs*

Instructed to "use both pedals," (1) soft (una corda) and (2) sustained, the left hand of the piano contains three phrases that change slightly out of synchronization with the three sections of vocal melody. The first phrase moves up and down in fifths, reminiscent of bowed string instrument tuning. While assigning tonality to a piece with Ives's typical lack of key signature can prove dubious, this first phrase of perfect fifths seems to function as an arpeggiated G13 chord supporting the vocal line. In the second phrase—beginning on "horn"—the left hand functions as a more traditional accompaniment cycling a C7 arpeggio under the second vocal phrase. The slight rhythmic deviation between the piano and vocal phrases reflects not only Ives's rhythmic idiosyncrasies (notice the tied G eighth-note in measure 6), but it creates a sense of instability inherent to memory. This murkiness is further accentuated by the rhythmic contrast between the eighth-note motion of the piano and the slower, more viscous character of the vocal line.

The final statements from the piano, whose dynamic is lowered to *ppp* along with the vocal line, consist of three altered chords, the last of which is a B half-diminished. Larry Starr describes the final chords: "For the first time in the piece, more than two notes are heard

simultaneously in the piano part, and the impression created of a sudden fullness and intensity is remarkable."[17] Might these mysterious chords represent the enigmatic and unresolved qualities of mortality? Or perhaps they are chord clusters which capture George's fascination with bitonality?[18] In any case, the focus shifts quickly to a tiny solo by the left hand, crossing over the right and playing very high, which is aurally distinctive by its distant key of F# major. It is a devastating quotation of "Taps," a perfect fourth that contains a world of emotion surrounding the death and burial in Wooster Cemetery that November day in 1894. This is one of the most simple and yet powerful moments in the whole of Ives's music.

The orchestral predecessor of "Remembrance" displays considerably more detailed musical textures than the piano and voice alone can achieve. In the score, each string section (violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and bass) is divided into two groups (I and II). There is a rather idiosyncratic practice as Ives alternates which of the subdivisions within the violas will play a fluid figure and which will play a whole-note drone. While this decision causes nearly imperceptible sonic differences, it highlights the incredibly nuanced level of orchestral textural manipulation exemplary of Ives's attention to detail.

The multiple instrumental layers in *The Pond* allow for a slower delivery of the melody; furthermore, the additional layers greatly enhance a phantasmagorical impression which Ives frequently conveys in his depictions of memory. The melody, identical to the one in "Remembrance," can be sung or played by trumpet or bassett horn, and the canon is scored for flute or "one violin in harmonics." In a composer's note on the score, Ives specifies:

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[17] Starr, 143.

[18] In his *Memos*, Ives recounts: "I couldn't have been over ten years old when he would occasionally have us sing, for instance, a tune like *The Swanee River* in the key of Eb, but play the accompaniment in the key of C. This was o stretch our ears and strengthen our musical minds, so that they could learn to use and translate things that might be used and translated (in the art of music) more than they had been." (*Memos*, 115)

> "Unless the orchestra is large, it is better, if possible, that the flute part be played 'off stage'; or that this part be taken by one violin playing harmonics. This, in a way, is to suggest the echo over a pond, as does the final F[#] (harmonic) in violin, which may sound for a moment after the other instruments stop."

These instructions indicate that the canon is the sound of his father's distant horn echoing over the surface of the orchestral pond. This pond is portrayed by a combination of rich drones and arpeggiated-fifths motion in the *con sordino* strings. Through the overlapping of multiple rhythmic layers, Ives creates the fluid impression of a body of water. While the violas and second violins maintain a sixteenth-note pattern, the first violins play an uneven and inconsistent rhythm (see example XX). It is interesting to note that the piano part (in duration, notation, and rhythm) is exactly the same in *The Pond* as it appears in "Remembrance." At the foundation of the orchestra, the double basses pluck eighth-note triplets, which results in a compound meter pulse against the common time signature.

Musical Example 1.2. Ives, *The Pond*, mm. 4-5

The Pond has one other fascinating line in the texture, marked "*pppp (as in distance)"*: chromatic circles of ninths played by "harps, with celesta or high bells ad lib." In the score, Ives instructs, "In the third and fourth upper staffs, a high bell or celesta may play the upper notes, and a harp the two lower notes." This layer sounds unpredictable and disconnected—

harmonically and rhythmically—from the rest of the ensemble, and strengthens the impression of natural vagueness that Ives employs in many of his natural portraits.

In addition to differences of instrumentation, *The Pond* is twelve measures long, compared to "Remembrance"'s nine measures. Ives uses these additional three measures to provide a symmetrical, musical framing. The orchestral version begins with two pensive chords over two measures, and holds the ending chord for an extra measure. Typical performances of *The Pond* last about double the duration of "Remembrance," partially due to its greater length and partially due to the greater magnitude of the orchestra.

With several instrumental colors on his musical palette, Ives creates a more vivid aural representation of the eternally transient—but ever gentle—surface of *The Pond*; such density of musical layers in *The Pond* creates thick smears of musical color that create a rather impressionistic display of his "father's song." Within this density, however, certain key features may be unclear to the uninformed audience. In particular, the canon echo played by a solo flute can be easily overpowered in an ensemble the size of what Ives suggests. While it is unknown if Ives was aiming for subtlety by giving the "Taps" quotation to a solo piccolo in *The Pond*, the quotation is substantially less apparent than its occurrence in "Remembrance." Ives wanted the final note of this piccolo solo to ring out, as he extends the final note F# beyond the duration of breath by having a violin play it as a harmonic (see Musical Example 1.3). This sustaining effect cannot be achieved in the song version. Compared to the quotation in "Remembrance," this gentle memorial of his father's death serves as a powerful symbol of Ives's own grief: bursts of emotion supported and obscured by gilded musical settings.

Musical Example 1.3. Ives, *The Pond*, mm. 10-12, relevant piccolo & violin systems isolated

In his discussion of what he describes to be a "problematic case," J. Peter Burkholder provides a table of potential sources for this composition's melody (see Figure 1.2).[19] They are (1) "Kathleen Mavoureen," a popular song from the 1840,[20] (2) *Largo cantabile*, an Ives chamber composition (appearing with various instrumentation) written very close to *The Pond* and later adapted into the song "Hymn" (first published as number 20 in the *114 Songs*), (3) *David*, a Handel tune appearing in Danbury's Methodist Church hymnal (where Ives attended), and (4) *Hexam*, a vocal arrangement using the melody from Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*, No. 9 in E Major, Op. 30, No. 3 ("Consolation") which appears in the hymnal from Yale's chapel.[21] Burkholder draws a larger conclusion from these possible sources as he

[19] Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 361.
[20] This possible quotation source was first proposed by Stuart Feder.
[21] Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 361.

describes the melody as “another example of modeling…in which Ives lends a quality of reverence or dignity to a passage by following the contour of a hymn.”[22] The ambiguity of this hymn-like melody is a facet of Ives’s “manner,” which conveys the spiritual “substance” of *The Pond* and “Remembrance.”

Figure 1.2. Potential sources for the melody of *The Pond* & “Remembrance”[23]

In the spring of 2003, after ten years of development, the town of Danbury opened The Ives Trail. On a Saturday morning in August 2013, I hiked up this trail on the side of Pine Mountain to an overlook where Ives erected a shanty in the early 1900s. Since I had been staying in Manhattan, I found the full presence of nature to be a soothing break from the bustle of the big city. Standing at the Ives’s overlook, I listened to *The Pond* and “Remembrance.” As I surveyed

[22] Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 362.
[23] *Ibid.*, 362.

the verdant Connecticut hillside and imagined the young Ives tinkering with compositional techniques to express his grief, I experienced a thrilling sense of connection with Ives. A few days later, I sat on the banks closest to Henry David Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond in Concord, MA. In retrospect, I believe there is a tremendous amount of connection between the "Thoreau" movement of the *Concord Sonata* and *The Pond*, particularly in the flute solo near the end of the movement, which Ives describes as an echo in his chapter on Thoreau in *Essays before a Sonata*:

> [T]he poet's flute is heard out over the pond and Walden hears the swan song of that "Day" and faintly echoes... Is it a transcendental tune of Concord? 'Tis an evening when the "whole body is one sense," ... and before ending his day he looks out over the clear, crystalline water of the pond and catches a glimpse of the shadow—thought he saw in the morning's mist and haze—he knows that by his final submission, he possesses the "Freedom of the Night." He goes up the "pleasant hillside of pines, hickories," and moonlight to his cabin, "with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself."[24]

There can be no doubt that the young Ives who composed sketches of *The Pond* on Pine Mountain in 1904 was already possessed with the spirit of transcendentalism he would so magnificently celebrate in his magnum opus, *The Concord Sonata*.

[24] *Essays before a Sonata*, 155.

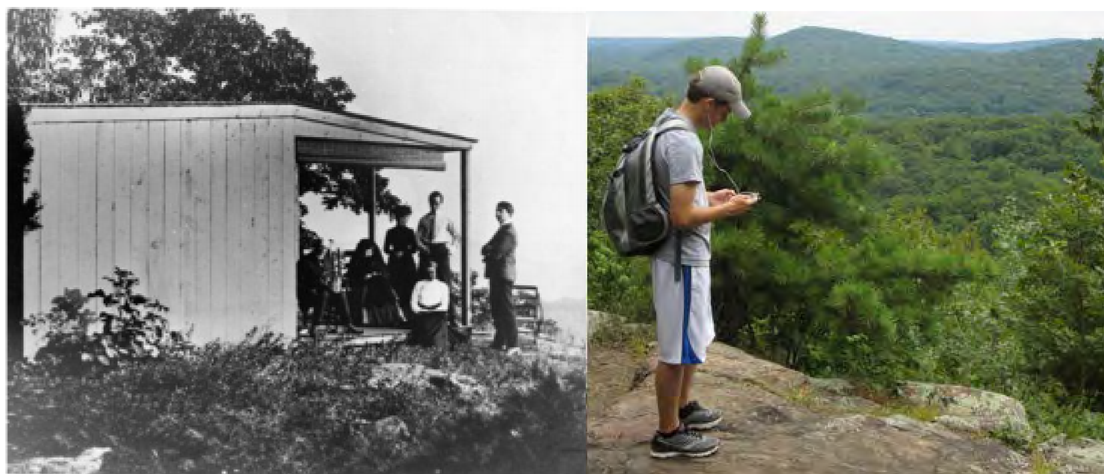

Figure 1.3. Left: "Charles Ives and friends relax at a lean-to at the Pine Mountain lookout, c. 1905"[25] Right: Standing on the same lookout, over a 100 years later.

Chapter Two: *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*

After graduating from Yale in 1898, Ives moved to New York City. That summer, his father's cousin, a medical examiner for the Mutual Insurance Company, helped Ives get a job in the actuarial department for Mutual.[26] Although the move to Manhattan was a drastic transition for the young man, Ives found refuge in his living arrangement. During his first decade in New York City, Ives lived with Yale friends in a series of apartments named "Poverty Flat," first at Columbus Circle, then at 65 Central Park West, then near Gramercy Park.[27] Ives supplemented his income by working as a church organist, eventually being hired as a choirmaster at the Central Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. It was during this tenure that he composed several choral works (the most popular of which are settings from Psalms) and his would-be claim to fame, an oratorio named *The Celestial Country*. When Ives received merely minor acclaim in the

[25] http://www.hvceo.org/Ives_Trail_Brochure_page1_20130413.pdf
[26] Feder, *Life of Ives*, 83.
[27] List of Ives's addresses available in Sinclair, *Descriptive Catalogue*

newspapers after the oratorio's premiere in 1902, he abruptly left his position as organist. He would never work for a church again.

Although Ives was an impulsive man, his decision to leave the professional realm of music was very logical. He was driven to graduate from his entry-level insurance position, and this goal required an enormous amount of time and effort; furthermore, without the obligation to write for a church, he could spend his nights writing the music that he wanted to compose. Thus began the quintessential career of the Ives legend: businessman-by-day, composer-by-night. Without the obligation to a church position, the bachelor Ives composed several works in a wide variety of styles including—but certainly not limited to—experimental compositions. Burkholder terms the period between 1902 and 1908 Ives's "Innovation and Synthesis" period.

Without any obligations to an audience or performers, Ives began to write for ideal performers; while this liberated a plethora of musical ideas, the torrential mind of this genius had little motivation to complete and polish many of his sketches.[28] It was during these years at Poverty Flat, Ives explains, that he conducted several musical experiments:

> Around this time, running say from 1906 (from the time of Poverty Flat days) up to about 1912-14 or so, things like…*Over the Pavements*…were made. Some of them were played—or better tried out—usually ending in a fight or hiss…I must say that many of those things were started as kinds [of] studies, or rather trying out sounds, beats, etc., usually by what is called politely "improvisation on the keyboard"—what classmates in the flat called "resident disturbances"[29]

[28] Burkholder, *Ives*, 91.
[29] *Memos*, 61.

Ives recognized the results of experimenting as such, noting that, "doing things like this (half horsing) would suggest and get one used to technical processes that could be developed in something more serious later, and quite naturally."[30] Anyone familiar with his oeuvre knows the abundance of incomplete pieces; Burkholder, however, makes a crucial distinction that, although the "character of incompleteness and indefiniteness was to become an important aspect of Ives's mature music," the pieces from the "Innovation and Synthesis" period were not artistically or aesthetically intended to be incomplete.[31] They were not completed, because Ives did not care to finish them.

A combination of Ives's fledgling professional life, his insecurities about music and masculinity (exacerbated by the constant presence of bachelor college friends), and the noise of New York City had a tangible effect on many pieces from the "Innovation and Synthesis" period. The *Memos* contain a substantial passage discussing *Over the Pavements* (begun circa 1906) in which Ives vividly describes the composition's programmatic inspiration:

> *Over the Pavements* was started one morning, when George Lewis and I had the front bedroom in Poverty Flat, 65 Central Park West… In the early morning, the sounds of people going to and fro, all different steps, and sometimes all the same—the horses, fast trot, canter, sometimes slowing up into a walk (few if any autos in those days)—an occasional trolley throwing all rhythm out (footsteps, horse and man)—then back again.[32]

He remembers the intention for *Over the Pavements* was two-fold: first, referring to his street scene, he was "struck with how many different and changing kinds of beats, time, rhythms, etc. went on together," and second, because "it struck me often [how] limited, static, and unnatural,

[30] *Ibid*., 61
[31] Burkholder, *Ives*, 91.
[32] *Memos*, 62.

almost weak-headed (at least in the one-syllable mental state), the time and rhythm (so called) in music had been:--1 – 2-, or 1 – 2 - 3 -, and if a 5 or 7 is played, the old ladies (Walter Damrosch[33] is one, I've seen him do it) divide it up into a nice 2 and 3, or 3 and 4, missing the whole point of a 5 or 7."[34] The resulting composition contains sounds and techniques that are baffling compared to its contemporaries.

Scherzo: Over the Pavements is scored for a ten-piece ensemble of piccolo, clarinet, bassoon (or saxophone), trumpet, three trombones, cymbals, drums, and piano, and has an average duration of five minutes. The stark contrasts between the instrumental timbres exemplify Ives's programmatic idea of different street characters (horses, people, etc.). Ives's instrumentation is limited to band instruments suitable for outdoor performance, the exception being the piano (which is played in a highly percussive style), to portray the streets of New York City. This composition's "scherzo" denotation indicates Ives's humorous approach rather than a conventional scherzo structure. *Over the Pavements* unfolds in a slightly palindromic structure, ABCDBCA (see Figure 2.1).

A: 0:00-0:31, mm. 1-31

B: 0:32-1:27, mm. 32-66

C: 1:28-2:04, mm. 67-80 ("Meno mosso")

D: 2:05-2:24, mm. 81-95 ("Cadenza")

B: 2:25-3:27

C: 3:28-4:05, repeat, but now with three trombones

A: 4:06-4:34, mm. 96-127 repeat, but now with snare and cymbals

Coda: 4:34-4:36, mm. 128-129

[33] Walter Damrosch (1862-1950); world-renowned conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra
[34] *Memos*, 62.

Figure 2.1. Structure of *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*[35]

The beginning of the A section is heard in a three-measure clarinet tune. This melody contains a sixteenth-note sequence of an upper-neighbor-tone followed by a descending tail with accents on the downbeats of the 3/8 time signature (see Musical Example 2.1).

Musical Example 2.1. Ives, *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*. mm. 61-62

Because of its nature as an exploration in rhythm, orienting strains such as this clarinet melody are hardly apparent without a score or playback. Ives makes even repeated sections in *Over the Pavements* sound brand new. For example, a part for three trombones is added when the C section is repeated, giving the section an entirely different sound. In many ways, *Over the Pavements* appears to the visitor just as disorienting and mutable as the city it portrays. Burkholder describes a cross-section of measures 61 and 62 that exemplifies the rhythmic traffic

[35] Time intervals according to recording by the Ensemble Modern (EMI 7545522, 1992.)

Ives strove to musically represent: "[T]he half-beats in the piccolo and piano left hand are grouped in threes, then twos; the third-beats in the brass, percussion, and piano right hand are grouped in twos, then threes; the third-beats in the bassoon are in groups of four; and the quarter-beats in the clarinet are in groups of five."[36]

Musical Example 2.2. Ives, *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*. mm. 61-62

By examining even just the first measure (61) of this two-measure passage, the concentration of non-imitative polyphony and dissonance is shocking. Despite their rhythmic synchronization, the piccolo and piano left hand have a very disjunct harmonic interplay. The piccolo rather disconnectedly ostinatos D G# G while the piano repeats a trichord (Eb, Bb, D) and then plays another trichord (C#, F, G); thus, the piccolo doubles one note in each of these trichords. The

[36] Burkholder, *Charles Ives and His World*, 16.

trumpet, perhaps the most audible instrument during this passage, repeats a wild pattern that begins with an upward minor-ninth leap (Bb to B) and is rhythmically grouped with the trombone section. Against the brass traffic, the piano right hand plays a cluster chord (E, G#, A, C) that clashes with all other layers in this measure. Although scarcely audible, the bassoon plays what appears to be an oom-pah bass support, but Ives writes an ascending minor-ninth (F# to G) and then a descending tritone (F# to C). As a blurry layer amidst this mass of sound is a clarinet running down five-note units, first with descending whole steps, then with irregular descending intervals. This one-measure cross-section reveals eight harmonically independent layers that are somewhat linked in rhythmic groups. Such a high level of dissonance runs through most of the measures in this composition, and it reflects the detailed effort which Ives invested in representing the cacophony of a New York City street scene.

Following the dissonant crash of measure 65, there is a piano C# half-diminished chord (“Meno mosso quasi andante”) that provides the listener with some dynamic respite and opens the C section. At the center of the piece in the D section is a passage marked “Cadenza (To play or not to play)” with the tempo marking “Allegro molto (or as fast as possible)” (see Musical Example 2.3).

Musical Example 2.3. Ives, *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*. mm. 81-82

In this passage, the piano plays the chromatic scale by going up and down the entire keyboard as fast as possible. Ives explains his intentions:

> The cadenza is principally a "little practice" that I did with Father, of playing the nice chromatic scale not in one octave but in all octaves—that is, 7ths, 9ths, etc.—good practice for the fingers and ears, especially as each time (up and down) was counted differently : 8 – 7 – 6 – 4 – 5 – 3 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – etc., and accented sometimes on the beginnings of the different phrases.[37]

[37] *Memos*, 63.

The piano does realize Ives's description in some ways. It climbs the chromatic scale in ninths, and descends—while still ascending the scale—in seventh intervals (although, this motion is not for the entire cadenza passage). It is accented at the beginning of the clarinet, bassoon, and trumpet phrases, and it is feasible to subdivide the part with a shifting count like Ives describes. Philip Lambert observes how:

> the winds present chords whose durations reflect their traditional labels: major sevenths in durations of seven sixteenths, major sixths in durations of six sixteenths (dotted quarters), perfect fifths in durations of five sixteenths, perfect fourths in durations of four sixteenths (quarter notes), major thirds in durations of three sixteenths, and major seconds in durations of two sixteenths (eight notes).[38]

Against the rather irregular mood of this section, there is a snare drum playing a solid string of eighth-notes separated by eighth rests. This may be an example of Ives's musical "joking," attempting to give the wild and disconnected motion of the piano a semblance of standard tempo; or, perhaps, this snare rhythm serves as metronomic glue that Ives found necessary for the ensemble at this point. All of these elements combine to create a whirlwind that strengthens Ives's vivid impression of New York City streets.

Over the Pavements demonstrates one of Ives's boldest and memorable techniques: piano-drumming (see measure 46 in Musical Example 2.4).

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[38]Lambert, *The Music of Charles Ives*, 177.

Musical Example 2.4. Ives, *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*. mm. 44-47

In his *Memos*, Ives recalls the origins of this idea: "When I was a boy, I played in my father's brass band, usually one of the drums. Except when counting rests, the practicing was done on a rubber-top cheese box or on the piano."[39] He explains that boredom from playing tonic or dominant chords in time drove him to "trying out sets of notes."[40] When considering the example in measure 46, one can see Ives demonstrating this piano drumming "for the snare drum, right-hand notes usually closer together—and for the bass drum, wider chords."[41] To an uninformed examiner, the passages similar to measure 46 may appear harmonically enigmatic; however, Ives explains "they had little to do with the harmony of the piece, and were used only as sound-

[39] *Memos*, 42.
[40] *Ibid*., 42
[41] *Ibid.*, 42.

combinations as such."[42] Thus, an appropriate interpretation for the piano part in *Over the Pavements* must consider Ives's moderate focus on the percussive—not solely harmonic—functions of the piano.[43]

After the recapitulation of the A section, Ives tags the piece with a hilarious, two-measure coda. To close four and a half minutes and 127 measures (not including repeats) of explosive musical chaos, the piece ends with a syncopated and light-hearted march in cut-time (see Musical Example 2.5). The key is C major, and the harmonic progression is a simple tonic, dominant, tonic over alternating tones in the bass on tonic and dominant. Upon first listen, ending with the bass (left hand of the piano) on the dominant may give the ending a trite and perfunctory feeling; however the simplicity contrasted with the enormously complicated whole

[42] *Memos*, 42.

[43] Ives's passage explaining piano-drumming also contains the image of his conduct in grade-school orchestra class: "sometimes, when practicing with others or in the school orchestra, I would play drum parts on the piano, and I noticed that it didn't seem to bother the other players—*if* I would keep away from triads etc., that suggested a key." (*Memos*, 43)

of the composition creates a very Ivesian joke.

Musical Example 2.5. Ives, *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*. mm. 125-129

Ives explains: “This piece, *Over the Pavements*, is also a kind of take-off of street dancing...”[44] In the piano part of this section, and in several other passages, we hear syncopated rhythms resembling ragtime. Perhaps this coda is Ives demonstrating his impatience with the relative simplicity of its syncopations.

In this mélange of harmonic and rhythmic dissonance and references to ragtime and marches (the popular forms of the day), Ives creates a vivid snapshot of early 1900s New York City. His composition serves not only as a demonstration of his rhythmic abilities but as a benchmark in musical history. Performing *Scherzo: Over the Pavements* is a challenge, and its

[44] *Memos*, 63.

difficulty parallels Ives's impression of life in New York City. During my first visit to the city, I remember being smacked with the toll on the George Washington Bridge and then jettisoned into an off-ramp eddy that whirled me into outrageous traffic. During another arrival to the city, I stepped off of a bus at Port Authority Station and was throttled into the aggressive walking-pace and screeching subway sounds of the subterranean circulatory system. Although my and Ives's first experiences with New York are more than a century apart, *Over the Pavements* remains a shockingly relatable impression of the city. The dense clusters in the score even spatially reflect its busyness. The "substance" of *Over the Pavements* shows the bachelor Ives attempting to make music from the cacophony; its focus is not particularly on his emotion, but rather his sensitivity to rhythms. In several ways, his attempt to notate the sounds of foot-traffic is very representative of his father's influence.

Chapter Three: The Housatonic at Stockbridge

In the summer of 1907, Ives began courting Harmony Twichell (1876-1969). Harmony was the daughter of the esteemed Reverend Joseph Hopkins Twichell[45] and the sister of Ives's good friend from Yale. Harmony was working as a registered nurse at the Henry Street Settlement in New York City, which allowed her to go out regularly with Ives.[46] During their courtship correspondence, Ives set Harmony's lyrics as the songs "The World's Highway" and "Spring Song" (numbers 90 and 65 in the *114 Songs*, respectively), and the pair conjured up a plot for an opera.[47] Harmony inspired Charles by giving him reading suggestions, and he

[45] Joseph Twichell was good friends with Mark Twain, and he appears as Mr. Harris in Twain's 1880 book, *A Tramp Abroad*. (Feder, *Father*, 201.)
[46] Feder, *Father*, 200.
[47] Feder, *Father*, 206.

reciprocated by taking Harmony to concerts and teaching her about music.[48] She was his closest friend and vital supporter.

The couple was married by Reverend Twichell on June 9, 1908.[49] On June 28, 1908, during their summer honeymoon, Charles and Harmony made a stop in Stockbridge, MA. Ives recalled:

> The last movement, *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, was suggested by a Sunday morning walk that Mrs. Ives and I took near Stockbridge, the summer after we were married. We walked in the meadows along the river, and heard the distant singing from the church across the river. The mist had not entirely left the river bed, and the colors, the running water, the banks and elm trees were something that one would always remember. Robert Underwood Johnson, in his poem, The Housatonic at Stockbridge, paints this scene beautifully.[50]

A combination of vibrant visual and aural elements, as well as the presence of his new bride, left a strong imprint on Ives. Upon his return to New York City, the experimentalist drew a sketch that sought to musically recreate the effervescent mists and religious echoes of the Housatonic scene. Ives's intention to capture these phenomena is present in a prototypical manuscript source on which he noted: "River mists, leaves in slight breeze river bed—all notes & phrases in upper accompaniment…should interweave in uneven way, riversides, colors, leaves & sounds—*not* come down on main beat."[51]

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[48] *Ibid.,* 207.
[49] "'Uncle Mark' (Twain) had already inspected the groom, turning him round and declaring him fit 'fore and aft.'" (Feder, *Father*, 214).
[50] *Memos*, 87.
[51] Kirkpatrick, 17.

There are two compositions entitled "The Housatonic at Stockbridge": movement three of *Three Places in New England* (also known as "Orchestral Set No. 1") and a song adaptation first published in the *114 Songs*. Ives claimed the origins of the work in his *Memos*: "I sketched the first part of this movement for strings, flute, and organ shortly after we got home that summer (June 30, 1908). It was scored completely in 1914."[52] The earliest extant source for "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" is a pencil-sketch fragment of measures 31-42[53] that contains the distinctive melody present in Ives's song version of "Housatonic." Such an early appearance of this melody (discussed later in further detail) and Ives's reference in the *Memos* to Johnson's poem may suggest that Ives had early intentions to add a vocal line to the music.

For the text of the song version, dated 1921 and first appearing as number fifteen in the *114 Songs* (1922), Ives used fourteen lines from Robert Underwood Johnson's (1853-1937) "To the Housatonic at Stockbridge," a 66-line poem first published in *Songs of Liberty and Other Poems* (1897). Ives's text source was the revised version republished in *Poems* (1902, 1908)[54] and appears with slight variation to the original 1897 text. Although Johnson is inconsequential as a poet, he held significant influence in American culture through his editor-in-chief position at *The Century* (a New York magazine with over a million readers).[55] The Indiana native, who moved to Washington DC and then New York after graduating from Earlham College, was a contemporary of Ives's and lived in New York.[56] Johnson gave influential support to conservationist John Muir (1838-1914) during the formation of Yosemite National Park, and he

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[52] *Memos*, 88.
[53] Sinclair, 40.
[54] *Ibid.*, 399.
[55] Worster, 310 and Warren, 99.
[56] Worster, 310-311.

promoted many government-funded natural projects.[57] Curiously, there is no mention of a visit to the Housatonic River in his detailed autobiography. Such an omission is puzzling, but does not necessarily mar the importance of this place. In the 1870s, during his first years as a young man in New York City, Johnson took frequent trips with a group of three friends "half by railway or steamboat, half on foot" around "all the environs of New York;" it is most likely that Johnson visited the Housatonic River during one such excursion.[58] His residence in New York City gave the countryside a similar appeal as it held for Ives. Johnson described the youthful joy of these excursions: "The happy comradeship of these healthful outdoor ramblings by four young fellows of high spirits and insatiate appetite for nature and a good time were the very spice of life for us."[59] In this poem, "To the Housatonic at Stockbridge," Johnson captures the spirit of these youthful trips and explores many themes that would have excited Ives. Lines 17-19 seem to reflect Ives's retreating into nature and memory for antidotal purposes of preserving his affection for nature:

> Soft winds of starlight whispered heavenly lore,
>
> Which, like our own childhood's, all the workday toil
>
> Cannot efface, nor long its beauty soil. (Johnson, Lines 18-20).

The musical fog which flows through the composition is not unsettling in its harmonic ambiguity; rather, the song maintains several minutes of peaceful flow. Even within the intense

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[57] While likely unbeknownst to Ives, Johnson's mention of music in his autobiography comes during his remembrance of his father singing folk tunes. Like Ives, he shows great admiration for his father: "He represented to us the divine attributes of love and mercy and that high standard of conduct: not to get one's happiness at the expense of others. I can wish a child no great boon than such a father." (Johnson, *Remembered Yesterdays*, 23)
[58] Johnson, *Remembered Yesterdays*, 153.
[59] *Ibid*., 153.

climax of the "Housatonic," there persists "the peace that only tumult can" as captured in this passage:

> Thus, like a gentle nature that grows strong
>
> In mediation for the strife with wrong,
>
> Thou show'st the peace that only tumult can ;
>
> Surely, serener river never ran. (Lines 24-28)

The reference in Johnson's poem to music "in bending lines,--like half-expected swerves of swaying music," causes one to wonder if Ives attempted to capture this winding nature in ever-fluid musical character of "Housatonic:"

> What eye but wanders with thee at thy will,
>
> Imagining thy silver course unseen
>
> Convoyed by two attendant streams of green
>
> In bending lines,--like half-expected swerves
>
> Of swaying music, or those perfect curves… (Lines 30-34)

The Johnson poem also possesses a distant religious ambience similar to Ives's piece. Perhaps Ives was inspired to add a hymn tune (*Dorrnance*) upon reading "betwixt twin aisles of prayer they seem to pass,"

> Ah! there's a restive ripple, and the swift
>
> Red leaves—September's firstlings—faster drift ;

Betwixt twin aisles of prayer they seem to pass

(One green, one greenly mirrored in thy glass). (Lines 59-62)

In the earliest published version of the *Orchestral Set No. 1* (Mercury, 1935), as a preface to the score, Ives included twenty-two lines of the Johnson poem (see Figure 3.2). One of the lines (not actually set by Ives to music), "Thee Bryant loved when life was at its brim," references American poet William Cullen Bryant[60], whose dates make him a contemporary of the transcendentalists. Ives's decision to include this reference to Bryant may suggest familiarity with his work.[61] In any case, Ives's setting of Johnson and Bryant connects him to generations of American naturalists who praised the Berkshires[62] of New England. Through this nationalistic celebration of geography, Ives joins the ranks of Romantic composers such as Wagner, whose Rhine music in *Das Rheingold* glorifies the Rhine River, and similarly Smetana, whose *Moldau* glorifies the Vltava/Moldau River.[63]

Due to its pared-down nature, an examination of the song version of "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" reveals several observations vital in understanding the orchestral version. For his song, Ives selected couplets containing exclamations ("Contended river!", "Thou beautiful!", "Contended River", "Ah!", "Wouldst thou away, dear stream?") for their expressive vocal power. These couplets, in four groups, have a relatively even distribution throughout the poem; this allows for Ives's structure of three "verses" and a fourth group of lines serving as an ending climax.[64] In an analysis of the song "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," Larry Starr elucidates

[60] 1794-1878, Romantic poet, writer, and editor of the *New York Evening Post*.
[61] Von Glahn, 73.
[62] The region of western Connecticut and western Massachusetts
[63] Burkholder, *Charles Ives and the Classical Tradition*, 13.
[64] This concept is explored in Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 330.

Ives's use of stylistic layering to create companionate musical effects.[65] In this microcosm of the orchestral movement, the song version of "Housatonic" reflects Ives's layering technique. The two layers of the song comprise of: (1) the piano right hand, forming an upper layer of harmonic ambiguities, and (2) the piano left hand with the vocal line. The left hand and voice function in similar tonal planes as the voice sings around tonal centers anchored in the right hand; because of its melodic quality, this layer occupies the aural foreground. The right hand, attempting to capture some of the complexities of the violin passages of the earlier orchestral version, occupies the background of the piece. Starr notes the smaller physical size of the notes as further indication of their quieter quality.

Concerning the right hand, Ives adds the following note:

> The small notes in the right hand may be omitted, but if played should be scarcely audible. This song was originally written as a movement in a set of pieces for orchestra, in which it was intended that the upper strings, muted, be listened to separately or subconsciously—as a kind of distant background of mists seen through the trees or over a river valley, their parts bearing little or no relation to the tonality, etc. of the tune. It is difficult to reproduce this effect with piano.

And yet, Starr warns, if the right hand is omitted, the fundamental contrast of simultaneous layering is lost. The progression of the "Housatonic" is not limited to the development in each of the layers but may also be heard in the manipulations between the layers (for example, allowing bits of the right hand to pop into the foreground). A switching of roles in the two layers may be a catalyst for much of the drama in the climax. The instability of the right hand seizes the voice,

[65] To give another example of such layering, Starr brings to mind the three instrumental characters (diatonic string chords, solo trumpet, and woodwind quartet) of *The Unanswered Question*.

cracks the harmonic reins, and lurches the piece "to the adventurous sea!" But there is a return to the left hand dominance in the two measure coda Ives adds to the ending (see Musical Example 3.1), of which Starr notes "the dissonant, disjunct style, far from rendering the more traditional style irrelevant or inexpressive, has in fact created a *need*, which the return of that style perfectly satisfies."[66] The "Housatonic" coda thus functions in an inverse way to the *Over the Pavements* coda (whose traditional style Ives humorously demonstrates as expressively trite).

Musical Example 3.1. Ives, "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," mm. 38-40, *114 Songs*

The melody of "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" has been characterized by H. Wiley Hitchcock as "a remarkable arabesque, a testament to Ives as melodist—so free and unforced and inevitable one is hardly aware of the recurrences in it of the opening phrase of *Missionary Chant*."[67] Here Hitchcock is referring to the prominent feature of the melody, a descending major third (see Musical Example 3.2).

[66] Starr, 123. Some details from this discussion of the song version can be found in Starr, 115-128.
[67] Hitchcock, *Ives*, 87.

Musical Example 3.2. Ives, "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," mm. 5-8, *114 Songs*

Later scholarship, however, more correctly identifies this "distant singing from the church across the river" as a relatively direct quotation of Isaac Woodbury's 1845 hymn tune "Dorrnance." Because this tune has been sung with a variety of texts and because Ives hardly ever expressed the original textual meaning of his quotation sources, we can forego an examination of the "original" source text.[68] More important is Ives's addition of an extra eighth-note to the introduction of this tune, which gives it an iambic character and allows him to set the poem selected for this composition.

[68] "There is almost never a correlation between the words of a borrowed source and that source's appearance in an Ives score… I have not been able to determine the precise words that Ives may have known or favored for some of the hymns where more than one text was commonly associated with the same melody." (Henderson, *The Charles Ives Tunebook*, 5)

The Passion and Crucifixion

226 DORRNANCE 8.7.8.7. Isaac B. Woodbury, 1845

1 Sweet the mo - ments, rich in bless - ing, Which be - fore the cross I spend;
Life and health and peace pos-sess - ing From the sin-ner's dy - ing Friend. A - MEN.

2 Here I'll sit, for ever viewing
Mercy's streams in streams of blood;
Precious drops, my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God.

3 Truly blessèd is this station,
Low before His cross to lie,
While I see Divine compassion
Pleading in His languid eye.

4 Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I'll bathe;
Constant still in faith abiding,
Life deriving from His death.

5 For Thy sorrows we adore Thee,
For the griefs that wrought our peace;
Gracious Saviour, we implore Thee,
In our hearts Thy love increase.

Rev. Walter Shirley, 1770 (based on Rev. James Allen, 1757):
verse 3, line 4, alt.: verse 5 added in Cooke and Denton's "Hymnal," 1853

Figure 3.1. Woodbury, "Sweet the moments, rich in blessing" or "Dorrnance," 1895[69]

The symmetrical and binary characteristics of the couplets within the Robert Underwood Johnson poem offer Ives with antecedent-consequent relationships to be musically expressed.

Ives Text in "The Housatonic at Stockbridge" (1921)	Robert Underwood Johnson Text (1897)
Contented river! in thy dreamy realm-- The cloudy willow and the plumy elm: Thou beautiful! From every dreamy hill What eye but wanders with thee at thy will,	Contented river! in thy peaceful realm— The cloudy willow and the plumy elm: Thou beautiful! From every dreamy hill What eye but wanders with thee at thy will,

[69] From hymnary.org : "The Hymnal : published in 1895 and revised in 1911 by authority of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : with the supplement of 1917 (1921), p.312"

Johnson's text	Ives's text
Contented river! and yet over-shy To mask thy beauty from the eager eye; Hast thou a thought to hide from field and town? In some deep current of the sunlit brown Ah! there's a restive ripple, and the swift red leaves--September's firstlings faster adrift;.. ...Wouldst thou away, dear stream? Come, whisper near! I also of much resting have a fear: Let me tomorrow thy companion be, By fall and shallow to the adventurous sea!	Contented river! and yet over-shy To mask thy beauty from the eager eye ; Hast thou a thought to hide from field and town? In some deep current of the sunlit brown Ah! there’s a restive ripple, and the swift Red leaves—September’s firstlings—faster drift ; Wouldst thou away, dear stream? Come, whisper near! I also of much resting have a fear: Let me to-morrow thy companion be By fall and shallow to the adventurous sea

Figure 3.2. Left: Johnson’s text, Right: Ives’s text

In the first line of the first couplet (“Contented river! in thy dreamy realm”), Ives sets “dreamy” with vocal melisma. In the consequent to the first line (“plumy elm”), he creates a sense of suspension as the voice lands on the sixth degree of Db major scale (see Musical Example 3.3).[70]

Musical Example 3.3. Ives, “The Housatonic at Stockbridge,” mm. 12-14, *114 Songs*

[70] In the piano at this point, tonic is difficult—and relatively unimportant—to identify. A majestic broken chord including Eb chords over altered Ab chords plays under the vocal melody.

In the third couplet ("Contended river! and yet over-shy," about halfway through the piece), Ives modulates the vocal key from Db major to E major. At "to mask thy beauty from the eager eye," he distinctively places "beauty" on the lowered seventh degree (D-natural) preceded by a descending interval of the augmented fourth (see Musical Example 3.4). By setting "beauty" on an altered scale degree, Ives expresses the mystery of the enshrouded beauty.

Musical Example 3.4. Ives, "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," mm. 23-25, *114 Songs*

At the conclusion of the fourth couplet, Ives transitions to a contrasting section in which the right hand notes gain regular size. Although the "slightly faster" tempo marking and increasing density in the accompaniment leads the listener into an ever-accelerating climax toward "to the adventurous sea!", there is an appropriate dynamic contrast on the phrase "Come, whisper near!" with a descending minor third similar to the main, descending major third motive.

Musical Example 3.5. Ives, "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," mm. 33-35, *114 Songs*

The final two measures contain an explosion in the voice and piano, yet while the voice sustains an F at *fff*, the pianist subtly triggers a two-measure coda by restoring the C#/G# chord from the first section of the piece (see Musical Example 3.1). Finally, the right hand plays the primary motive, a descending major third (G# to E).

Ives reworked the 1914 orchestral version for a world premiere with Nicolas Slonimsky and the Boston Chamber Orchestra in Town Hall in New York City on January 10, 1931. Ives was pleased by the performance, as Slonimsky recalled in 1969: "Ives told me that he liked the informal manner of the whole concert. He said that it was like 'a town meeting' and that everyone seemed to enjoy it. He seemed happy, in his reticent way, about the whole affair, and told me so when I had dinner with him the next day."[71] The orchestral version underwent several revisions. James Sinclair, among the most important Ives editors, has summarized some crucial textural revisions Ives made between orchestral versions: "there's a remarkable switch where, in

[71] Perlis, *Charles Ives Remembered*, 151.

the 1914 version, Ives left a very thing texture…all of its wandering lines and Layered violin lines, watery pictures…are written out in the 1908 sketches in very complete form and yet, for some reason, not worked out in the 1914 version. But they are back in the score in the 1929 revision."[72] A version for symphony orchestra was premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra 1948 and later, a version for which Ives includes a part for an optional "ether organ" (Theremin) was premiered by the Yale Symphony Orchestra in 1974.

With more than a piano and voice in his palette, Ives is able to express greater complexity in the "ambiguous" layer of "Housatonic." In the orchestral version, there is a steady stream of harmonic instability and ambiguity that is sustained primarily within the upper strings. The violins are marked "*pppp*" and "*sordini*," divided into four sections, and sound with a gossamer dynamic. In measures 1 through 21, the first violins play a melodic progression which develops in a seemingly unpredictable manner that emulates the effervescence of mist on the river surface (see Musical Example 3.6).

Musical Example 3.6. Ives, *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, mm. 1-2, Orchestral Set No. 1

[72] Hitchcock and Perlis, *An Ives Celebration*, 76.

Ives obsesses over their strictly "background feature" in his instructions to other sections, such as the cello entrance: "*p-mp* (*non sordini*) (but strong enough to throw the upper strings into the background)"; he further insists on the background quality of the musical stream in the upper strings through the note attached to this horn solo: "mp-mf, depending on the volume and position of upper strings—but sufficiently loud to keep these in the background." Similar to the first violin motion are other spinning *sordini* figures in the second, third and fourth violins and in the upper violas.

Existing within—and without—this background texture is a melody that Ives develops between several different instrumental voices. Beginning with a descending major third of scale degrees 3 and 1 of a tonic C# major chord, this melody is harmonically and rhythmically similar—and, at times, identical—to the melody found in the song adaptation. The melody's first appearance comes from a solo French horn, given a watery texture by the timbre of the lower violas doubling. The lower viola section maintains a central role in the melodic content of this movement as it consistently doubles the melody during its transitions between different instrumental sections.

Below the melody and present throughout the majority of the piece is a drone in the double bass and organ pedal. The omnipresence of this harmonic stability recalls the "silence of the druids" from *The Unanswered Question*[73]; it is interesting to consider line 52 in the Johnson poem: "Of sturdy willows like a druid stood." Because of its established stability, there is significance in the moment where Ives chooses to disturb the peaceful drone. In measure 34 at the beginning of the climactic section, the drone begins to shake with tremolo. The disturbance of the drone is part of a massive *tutti* crescendo that spans twelve measures of the end. In

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[73] In the forward to this well-known work (composed 1908), Ives writes: "The strings play ppp throughout with no change in tempo. They are to represent 'The Silences of the Druids—Who Know, See and Hear Nothing.'"

measure 35, the double bass and organ lose their sense of grounding and begin moving with asymmetric rhythms and tones. In measure 39, they melt into octave-wide *glissandos* that end in the "*ffff*" *tutti* eruption in measure 43 (see Musical Example 3.7). As Ives restores serenity in the final two measures of the piece, the drone returns with a "*ppp*" marking.

Musical Example 3.7. Ives, *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, mm. 42-44, Orchestral Set No. 1

The orchestral and song versions are very similar. Their durations are analogous (each lasts about four minutes). The song may be understood in part as a reduction of the orchestral version, as there is a multitude of transcriptions—for example, the identical voicing of the opening cello line in the upper portion of the piano's left hand—within the song. But compared to the majestic scale and detail of the orchestral version, the vocal setting stands as a powerful lone statement and an even more tremendous companion piece. The song is almost like an answer-key to the orchestral movement in which Ives actually reveals the words of the melody. Feder suggests that the "Housatonic" is a musical representation of Harmony, as the river of Johnson's poem may be a woman; furthermore, he aptly characterizes the movement, and particularly the ending, as "companionate."[74] Combining these two interpretations, "Housatonic"

[74] Feder, *Father*, 225-226.

may be understood as Ives's representation of Harmony's serenity balancing his lofty spirituality and loud temper.[75]

On a summer afternoon in August 2013, I arrived at the banks of the Housatonic River in the little town of Stockbridge, MA. True to Johnson's description, the river is hidden by thick lines of willows. As I listened to the orchestral version, I remember feeling perturbed by the uneasiness that Ives's misty layers create. His effects, now understood, seemed counter-intuitive in capturing such a serene place as the "contented river." My lack of understanding reflects a challenge to interpreting Ives's music: while there is much to be revealed beneath, the surface of his music is often aurally jagged such that it confuses the listener. If I ever visit the Housatonic at Stockbridge again, I imagine my experience will be quite different.

Chapter Four: The Alcotts

Charles Ives's Sonata No. 2 for Piano: *Concord, Mass., 1840-1860* portrays adventurous American philosophers with adventurous American composition. This dense, four-movement *magnum opus* contains his impressions of several mid-nineteenth century thinkers centered in the small town of Concord, MA: Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888) and his daughter Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888), and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). In the opening movement "Emerson," Ives recreates the turbulence of this man's winding introspections. Within the piece are chunks of ore mined from Emerson's transcendentalist soul. Out of these tonally arduous passages shine gems of ideas that are represented by the perennial opening motive of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. If the first

[75] Similar to the calming effect of Bronson Alcott's wife on his "philosopher's debate" (discussed later), perhaps the most poignant moment of "Housatonic" is the return to serenity after the furious climax.

movement presents the thrill of Emerson's discoveries, "The Alcotts" may be understood as a gilded setting of the cut and polished gems. Conveyed through a gentler harmonic language are transcendental kernels contained in the other three movements.

Ironically, the serenity of "The Alcotts" proclaims Ives's message with far greater poignancy than many of the fiercer movements in the sonata. In his entry on "The Alcotts" in his companion writings *Essays before a Sonata*, Ives places a bit of restriction on the listener's interpretation of the movement: "We dare not attempt to follow the philosophic raptures of Bronson Alcott…so we won't try to reconcile the music sketch of the Alcotts with much besides the memory of that home under the elms."[76] With this restriction, Ives focuses the listener's attention away from Alcott's philosophy and shifts it toward the house he inhabited. Connection will not be attempted between the musical content of this movement and the tenets of Bronson's philosophy, of which Ives's own comments suggest he had no substantial knowledge.[77] Instead, "The Alcotts" is a musical depiction of the spirit of Orchard House (the Concord home of the Alcott family from 1858-1877).

Ives made two known trips to Concord: one in June of 1908 on his honeymoon with Harmony and one in 1916. While not much is documented about his 1908 visit to Concord, he undoubtedly saw Orchard House.[78] According to the executive director of Orchard House, Jan Turnquist, before its transformation into a museum in 1910, tourists would come in flocks to peek through the windows of the deteriorating old house. By the time of his visit in 1916, however, the house was an operating museum, and he could very well have taken a tour. While it

[76] *Essays before a Sonata*, 139.
[77] Block (E-Book), 6.
[78] The house is less than a mile from the center of Concord.

is tempting to say that the composition of "The Alcotts" was informed by a toured experience of Orchard House, it is unlikely considering the dates associated with its creation.

In his memo on the inception of the *Concord Sonata*, Ives explains how "the idea… originally came from working on some overtures representing literary men—for instance, Walt Whitman, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Emerson…"[79] During this explanation, Ives offers several confused details of a sketch called the *Emerson Overture* with the caveat that he lacks confidence in the accuracy of his memory regarding its construction. In spite of his general uncertainties, he asserts that the "Emerson movement printed in the piano book is a partial reduction for piano from the sketch of this concerto."[80] Geoffrey Block explains this *Emerson Overture* (1907-1914) to be "the never-completed principal source piece for…the "Emerson" movement in the *Concord Sonata*."[81] But even earlier seeds of the *Concord Sonata* are present in what Ives lists as "an Alcott Overture, 1904, with a theme and some passages used in the sonata."[82][83] The "Alcott Overture" has not been recovered, but it is mentioned again by Ives in his memo on the genesis of the *Fourth Symphony*: "*Fourth Symphony*. This was started, with some of the Hawthorne movement of the *Second Piano Sonata*, around 1910-11 (though partly from themes in the unfinished Alcott overture, 1904)."[84] According to Kirkpatrick's note concerning this line, Ives penciled in: "though Alcotts middle part was April 1902".[85] The final first edition ink score of "The Alcotts" is dated November 28, 1914. Amidst many claims that

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[79] Browning, Whitman, and Arnold are all featured in the *114 Songs* in numbers 30, 31, and 105, respectively. Quote taken from *Memos*, 76.
[80] *Memos*, 76.
[81] Block, *Ives Studies*, 29.
[82] *Memos*, 163.
[83] Above this item he marks "composed on Pine Mt. around 1902-04," referencing the location where *Remembrance* was started (Memos 163).
[84] *Memos*, 64-65.
[85] *Ibid.,* 64n.

Emerson had the most influence on *Concord Sonata*, the "Alcott Overture" (composed in 1902 or 1904) stands as the earliest source of Ives's masterpiece.[86]

Stuart Feder gives a qualified speculation as to Ives's mental health during the period of the *Concord Sonata*'s composition (1911-1915). Having married Harmony three years earlier, their relationship provided Ives with a nurturing balm that helped to soothe his tension between career and composition, as well as his unresolved grief for his father George. Feder reasons that, as Harmony made reading a consistent activity for Ives, literature and its figures took a central place in his mental stimulation and creative expression.[87] His interest in the transcendentalists arose partly from his interest in Emerson while at Yale and, more speculatively, from a tiny family connection to Emerson, as he had once stayed at the Ives house on Main Street during a visit.[88] Ives's obsession with Emerson grew such that he "was closest to the George Ives of Ives's mental life, a transformation of the hero of childhood, the idealized father."[89] Ultimately, the *Concord Sonata* seems to arise out of Ives's belief in the "most inspiring theme of Concord Transcendental Philosophy" which is "the strength and beauty of innate goodness in man, in Nature, and in God."[90] For a man so reclusive, this fundamental belief was recognized as early as Henry Bellaman's biographical article, published in 1931, and he believed it arose from his insurance business experience:

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[86] An interest in Bronson Alcott may have been self-reflective for Ives when considered with what Wilfrid Mellers's considers the two American characteristics of Ives: pioneering spirit and innocence (Mellers, 38). With these two inherent traits in mind, Ives would have resonated in his characterization of Bronson as: "A Yankee boy who would cheerfully travel in those days, when distances were long and unmotored, as far from Connecticut as the Carolinas, earning his way by peddling, laying down his pack to teach school when opportunity offered" (Essays).
[87] Feder, 260.
[88] *Ibid*., 261.
[89] *Ibid*., 265.
[90] *Essays*, 132.

> [T]he nature of the business was such that it brought him in close relation with thousands of men of all kinds and conditions. This association of over thirty years, with its opportunity of knowing and working with so many men, did what it apparently does not to some men—it gave him a high respect for, a deep interest and confidence in the average man's mind and character.[91]

Considering the score of "The Alcotts" was completed in 1914, there can be no speculation relating musical evidence to an Orchard House tour. *Essays before a Sonata*, however, was not published until 1919 along with the entire first edition of the sonata.[92] Evidence of an Orchard House tour during his second Concord trip in 1916 is particularly present in the last three paragraphs of his entry on "The Alcotts" which describe Orchard House. Despite the fact that a tour through the house may not have informed this composition, he seems to have absorbed enough information from his first visit to generate a powerful portrait of the house and its inhabitants. It is rather fitting that Ives sets the centrally-located, philosopher-frequented house at the heart of the *Concord Sonata*. The movement also contains what Burkholder refers to as the "cumulative form" of the heart of the sonata, namely a "human faith melody" and a Beethoven figure[93]. To fully understand this movement, refer to a musical outline of its contents in Figure 4.1.

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[91] Bellaman, 46.

[92] The *Concord Sonata* was published a second time in 1947. Among the differences between the original and second editions, Block suggests that revisions arose from Ives's desire to "*restore*" ideas from the *Emerson Overture* (1907-14) and dissonances from the autograph ink score of the sonata dated 1919 (Lambert, Ives Studies, pg. 29). As for "The Alcotts," the differences are relatively sparse; perhaps the largest difference is the addition of "ghost notes" (harmonic textural effects) in the second edition; this is to say, no major programmatic shift occurred between first and second editions of "The Alcotts."

[93] "Since this theme is new and is not an existing or paraphrased tune, despite its incorporation of borrowed material, this is the one Ives work that might be more justifiably called a cumulative form than a cumulative setting." (All Made of Tunes 195).

First Section

- "5th" material sounded in BbM, pg. 53, 1st system
- Establishment of AbM drone in left hand, pg. 53, end of 1st sys.
- Human Faith Melody (first half), pg. 53, 2nd sys. BbM
- Beethoven Synthesis ("5th" + Hammerklavier + Forecast of Extension), pg. 53, 3rd sys. BbM
- Concord Bell, pg. 53, 3rd sys.
- Human Faith Melody (first and full), pg. 53 4th sys. – pg. 54 1st sys. BbM
- Philosopher's Debate, pg. 54 1st sys. – pg. 54 3rd sys.
    - "5th" and *Hammerklavier* material, pg. 54, 1st & 2nd sys.
    - "Shouts," pg. 54, 3rd sys.
- Human Faith Melody (second full), pg. 55, 1st & 2nd sys.
- Beethoven Synthesis ("5th" + *Hammerklavier* + extension) pg. 55, 2nd & 3rd sys.

Middle Section- Scottish Song (ABAB form)

- First Strain, pg. 55, 3rd & 4th sys., EbM
- Second Strain, pg. 56, 1st & 2nd sys., BbM
- First Strain, pg. 56, 2nd & 3rd sys. , EbM
- Second Strain, pg. 56, 3rd & 4th sys., BbM
- Transition, pg. 56 4th sys. – pg. 57 3rd sys.
    - Human Faith Melody (fragments), pg. 57, 2nd sys. (left hand BbM, right hand EbM)
    - AM & BbM fluctuation in left hand, three attempts to build CM triad in right hand

Conclusion- CM

- Human Faith Melody in Chords, pg. 57, 4th sys.
- Beethoven Synthesis Statement, pg. 57, 4th & 5th sys.
- Human Faith Melody (first half), pg. 57, 5th sys.

Figure 4.1 Outline of "The Alcotts" from *The Concord Sonata*

Ives begins the movement with a soft interpretation (in B-flat) of the menacing opening figure from Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. In contrast to Beethoven's descending major-third figure outlining the upper half of the minor tonic triad (Cm), Ives's allusion contains the third and first scale degrees of the major tonic triad (BbM). Because this motive has been referenced several times in the previous two movements, this quiet opening has a comforting effect on the listener. Christopher Bruhn examines the *Concord Sonata* through the lens of the psychologist

and philosopher William James (1842-1910).[94] An essential element of James's studies is his principle of the "stream of thought," which proposes that consciousness is composed of transitive thinking—termed "flights"—alternated with "perchings," which are substantive reflections "occupied by sensorial imaginations…[that] can be held before the mind for an indefinite time, and contemplated without changing."[95] Bruhn suggests that the "The Alcotts" is the sonata's definitive "perching" movement.[96] Indeed, the subject of Orchard House does provide the listener with such "sensorial imaginations…that can be held before the mind." By this relatively peaceful reference to the "5th," Ives establishes a restful spirit of "perching" that characterizes much of this movement's tone.

Musical Example 4.1. Beethoven "5th" allusion, Ives, "The Alcotts," *Concord Sonata*, 1st system, Page 53

[94] In Bruhn's article "The Transitive Multiverse of Charles Ives's 'Concord' Sonata," he notes that Ives took a two-semester course his junior year (1896) at Yale called "Logic, Psychology, and Ethics I," and it was through this course—in particular, the section on experimental psychology—that he was most likely exposed to William James (Bruhn, 170). Most of Bruhn's evidence finds parallels between the diction in the *Essays* and James's writings; if these do not convince the reader of direct borrowing, one can at least admit to the breadth of parallel thinking between Ives and James. Bruhn's work not only gives a Jamesian interpretation of the *Concord Sonata*, but it implicitly suggests a potentially gigantic influence of William James's ideas on other Ives compositions.

[95] William James quoted in Bruhn, 171.

[96] Bruhn, 181.

This chordal setting of Ives's allusion to the "5th" provides strong contrast to Beethoven's unison orchestral texture. In cushioning the delivery of the "5th," it has been speculated that Ives may have used Zeuner's hymn *Missionary Chant* ("Ye Christian heralds"); this borrowing may also establish a religious tone to the movement.[97]

Musical Example 4.2 Left: Zeuner, *Missionary Chant*, mm. 2-3[98] Right: Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," 1st system, Page 53

This opening material fades out with the establishment of an AbM drone in the left hand. Above this drone is the first half of what scholars refer to as "the human faith melody" in BbM; we will define this musically upon its first full appearance in the piece. The functionality of the drone in this bitonality allows for the melodic material to have a texture that is misty to the ear but never frightening. After this preview comes a crucial Beethoven synthesis:

[97] Charles Zeuner (1795-1857), born in Saxony; worked in both Boston and Philadelphia as church organist; was president of the Handel and Haydn Society 1838-1839.
[98] Image from Block (E-Book), 83.

Musical Example 4.3. Top: Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," Beethoven synthesis, 3rd system, Page 53 Bottom: Beethoven, *Hammerklavier*, mvt. I, mm. 1-4

This synthesis contains material from the "5th," material from the opening of the *Hammerklavier*, and an extension of the *Hammerklavier* that is a forecast for the final system in this movement.

The parallels between Beethoven and Ives are massive in number and importance. The innovations of both men were propelled by an acute disappointment with existing musical language, and many of their innovations were composed in isolation.[99] In the eccentric epilogue of *Essays before a Sonata*, Ives puts forth an extreme thought with reference to Beethoven:

> Music may be yet unborn. Perhaps no music has ever been written or heard. Perhaps the birth of art will take place at the moment, in which the last man, who is willing to make a living out of art is gone and gone forever. In the history of this youthful world the best product that human-beings can boast of is probably, Beethoven—but, maybe, even his art is as nothing in comparison with the future product of some coal-miner's soul in the forty-first century.[100]

In this passage, Ives justifies his career decision as an idealized martyrdom—that true music may only be made by the man who purifies himself from the pressures of monetary gain. He also

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[99] One can imagine that Ives, a man who gave several instructions to punch the keyboard, would have given Beethoven, the notorious destroyer of pianofortes, a run for his money.

[100] *Essays*, 172.

establishes his belief that Beethoven is supreme. But from the *Memos*, one gleans his belief that Beethoven was limited by his time:

> [E]ven the best music we know, Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms…was too cooped up—more so than nature intended it should be…not only in its chord systems and relations…but in its time…all up and down even little compartments, over and over—2 or 3…all so even and nice all the time—producing some sense of weakness, even in the great.[101]

Through the *Concord Sonata*'s extensive nods toward Beethoven, it may be understood as Ives liberating and extrapolating Beethoven's mission.

There are many connections between Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 29 "*Hammerklavier"* and the *Concord Sonata*. Just as the *Concord Sonata* was composed at nearly the end of Ives's creative output, the *Hammerklavier* was written when Beethoven's compositional frequency saw significant decrease. In both cases, this deceleration was caused in part by physical limitations. For Ives, this was largely due to declining physical and mental health. For Beethoven, it was partially his advanced deafness and partially his desire to compose even higher quality works that caused this deliberate shift in approach**.** Both Ives and Beethoven were aware that their sonatas required such demanding piano technique, they would be rather inaccessible to many pianists within the first few decades after their release; in the case of the *Hammerklavier*, only pianists like Liszt, von Bülow, and Clara Schumann undertook the initial challenge of performing the work. Written almost one hundred years before the *Concord Sonata* in 1816-1818, the *Hammerklavier* was formally dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph and the

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[101] *Memos,* 100.

rhythm of the opening figure may be "vivat vivat rudolphus".[102] This opening figure is quoted directly by Ives, even in the same key as the *Hammerklavier*, and functions as a sort of consequent to the antecedent "5th" motive within "The Alcotts." In this synthesis, the *Hammerklavier* figure functions as a majestic reiteration of the "5th" figure as it ends with a descending major third.

Musical Example 4.4. Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," Concord Bell, 3rd system, Page 53

In the distance, Ives creates an impression of bells ringing in the distance (see Musical Example 4.4). As is present in much of his oeuvre, he was obsessed with the effects of long distance on musical sounds. This fascination was likely inherited from his father, who was famed for his experimentation with unusual spatial and tonal arrangement. Within *Essays before a Sonata*, Ives mentions the Concord bell twice. The second reference is in the section on "Thoreau," and it mentions Thoreau hearing "the Concord bell" coming through the woods to his cabin at Walden Pond.[103] The first reference is found in "Emerson":

[102] Kinderman, 223-224.
[103] *Essays*, 155.

> Later in life, the same boy hears the Sabbath morning bell ringing out from the white steeple at the "Center," and as it draws him to it, through the autumn fields of sumac and asters, a Gospel hymn of simple devotion comes out to him—"There's a wideness in God's mercy"—an instant suggestion of that Memorial Day morning comes—but the moment is of deeper import—there is no personal exultation—no intimate world vision—no magnified personal hope—and in their place a profound sense of a spiritual truth,—a sin within reach of forgiveness—and as the hymn voices die away, there lies at his feet—not the world, but the figure of the Saviour—he sees an unfathomable courage, an immortality for the lowest, the vastness in humility, the kindness of the human heart, man's noblest strength, and he knows that God is nothing—nothing but love![104]

In this passage, which is very representative of his writing style in *Essays before a Sonata*, this “morning bell” seems to trigger a transcendental journey that leads the boy to discover “a profound sense of spiritual truth.” This chiming figure, marked *pianissississimo*, may have several functions; in regards to “The Alcotts” being a representation of Orchard House, this effect may remind the listener of its centrality within the Concord community. They also physically establish the listener at the location of Orchard House; perhaps Ives heard the bell from Concord ringing during his visit to Orchard House, and he is recreating the distant dynamics here.

Following the bell is the first full appearance of the “human faith melody.”[105] Ives mentions this concept in his entry on “The Alcotts”:

> All around you, under the Concord sky, there still floats the influence of that human faith melody, transcendent and sentimental enough for the enthusiast or the cynic respectively,

[104] *Ibid*., 128.
[105] Ives references this figure several times in “The Alcotts,” and the melody makes its most profound appearance as a flute solo near the end of “Thoreau.” This sound is stunning, as Thoreau himself was a flute player.

> reflecting an innate hope—a common interest in common things and common men—a tune the Concord bards are ever playing, while they pound away at the immensities with a Beethovenlike sublimity, and with, may we say, a vehemence and perseverance—for that part of greatness is not so difficult to emulate.[106]

The "human faith melody" is often defined as:

Musical Example 4.5. Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," Human Faith Melody, 4th system of page 53 and 1st system of page 54

This melody ends on the supertonic in BbM. Although this C natural is technically the third of an Am chord at this point, its primary harmonic function is a supertonic tendency tone that incites tension for the arrival of the BbM chord which follows it in the Beethoven synthesis figure. In this appearance, the "human faith melody" is accompanied by an intentionally disorienting left hand. Bruhn quotes William James as desiring "the re-instatement of the vague to its proper

[106] *Essays*, 138-139.

place in our mental life," and he suggests that Ives placed similar value on vagueness.[107] This harmonically disorienting left hand may be Ives infusing the melody with a hazy quality. A similar effect may be seen in several outrageously convoluted moments in *Essays before a Sonata*, and it may be Ives trying to recreate the mystery prevalent in transcendentalist thought.

On an August afternoon in 2013, I visited Orchard House. The most interesting room in the house is Bronson's study. Within those walls, Bronson Alcott facilitated many philosophical discussions and lessons. One can imagine Bronson's voice, as portrayed by Ives, ringing through the study in a "didactic" and "mellifluous" tone. One can also imagine the cluttered sound of many men discussing and debating philosophical principles. Even today, these sounds are practically echoing through the house. With the "human faith melody" sounded in its full form, Ives takes us to a section that may be understood as a philosopher's debate. In this section, one can hear the masculine authority of Bronson declaring the principles of the "5th" to the men gathered in his study with an attention-grabbing fortissimo. Following these declarations, one can hear the clamor of men arguing over the transcendental philosophies that were so discussed in Bronson's house. Ives achieves this argument effect as the "5th" is twisted and stretched by chromaticisms and sequences. As elements from the "5th" and the *Hammerklavier* are obsessively repeated, Ives achieves the "vehemence and perseverance" with which "the Concord bards…pound away at the immensities."[108] It is interesting to note that even in such a forward-driving passage, the "5th" material is still contained within chords which give it more vertical character than Beethoven's linear, almost polyphonic development of this figure. These discussions escalate, and are even peppered by shouts high above the harmonic brawl:

[107] William James quoted in Bruhn, 173.
[108] *Essays*, 138.

Musical Example 4.6. Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," Shouts, 3rd system, Page 54

During my visit, I listened to "The Alcotts" while sitting by front door; I had a view of Bronson's study to my left, the parlor to my right, and the stairs leading to Louisa's room before me. Out of this hypothetical raucous (which ends with a reference to the "5th" in its original key of Cm) comes a return to serenity and unity followed with a sounding of the "human faith melody." The fury is extinguished by two high notes, an F# and then a C#.

Musical Example 4.7. Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," appeasement notes, 1st system, Page 55

At this moment, while listening inside the Orchard House, I remember having the thought of Bronson's well-educated wife, Abigail May, asking Bronson to keep things down. While this

humorous image is purely imaginative, it serves as a reminder that such powerful philosophies were hashed out inside a family residence. This philosopher's meeting comes to a close with a recapitulation of the "human faith melody," more along the lines of "a tune the Concord bards are ever playing, while they pound away at the immensities with a Beethovenlike sublimity."[109] Following this comes a soft sounding of the Beethoven synthesis (extension included) that is mystified by a whole tone chord cycle in the left hand; the pairing of these tonalities creates a question-mark like emphasis on the Beethoven synthesis:

[109] *Essays*, 138.

Musical Example 4.8. Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," Human Faith Melody followed by Beethoven synthesis with murky whole tone cycle 1st -3rd systems, Page 55

The middle section of "The Alcotts" is a distillation of the idealized home life Ives longed to recreate. As Stuart Feder points out in his comprehensive biography, parts of this movement were composed during the first summer that Charles and Harmony spent at their home in Redding, CT. He suggests that their move to this rural town was an attempt to return to his Danbury, which, by this point, had been developed beyond spiritual recognition for Ives.[110] The dreamers of Orchard House were not only the transcendentalists but also two little boys. Through a passageway in the northern side of the master bedroom, Bronson built the nursery and playroom where Anna Alcott's sons Frederick and John grew up. In the little room is a small bookshelf, full of volumes that Bronson may have read to his grandsons; toys still litter the floor, and out of the window is a view of the Concord School of Philosophy in the backyard. The idea of a rustic New England childhood facilitated by such humble giants would have been thrilling to Ives.

The harmonic language of this section is relatively lucid, making it a strong parallel to the language of *Little Women* (written at Orchard House in 1868-1869) by Bronson's daughter, Louisa May Alcott. The middle section is a song in ABAB form, although the repeated second strain transforms into a development section that is not within the bounds of ABAB. Adding to this sense of formal organization is the presence of bar lines, a consistent key signature (EbM), and—except for the appearance of 6/4 bars—a relatively steady rhythmic scheme. Ives conveys a strong sense of nostalgia through the beautiful melodies laid out in this form, and he evokes this passage of the *Essays*:

[110] Feder, *Father*, 268.

> Within the house, on every side, lie remembrances of what imagination can do for the better amusement of fortunate children who have to do for themselves-much-needed lessons in these days of automatic, ready-made, easy entertainment which deaden rather than stimulate the creative faculty. And there sits the little old spinet-piano Sophia Thoreau gave to the Alcott children, on which Beth played the old Scotch airs, and played at the Fifth Symphony.[111]

Scholarship regarding possible source materials for these two strains has been extensive, and Geoffrey Block lists three other borrowing sources that have been postulated thus far:

a "Loch Lomond" (App. 1, 15)

Ex. 4.1 a, ... transformation of App. 1, 3 b

But me and my true love will nev-er meet a - gain, on the

Ex. 4.1 a, ...

b Wagner, *Wedding March* from *Lohengrin* (App. 1, 16)

Treu - lich ge - führt

c Winnemore, "Stop that Knocking at My Door" (App. 1, 17)

I once did__ lub a co-lord Gal__ Whose

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[111] *Essays*, 138.

Figure 4.2 Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," Possible Borrowing Sources[112]

Ives may be alluding to the familial ritual of marriage by quoting the iconic "Bridal Chorus" from Wagner's *Lohengrin* at the end of the first strain of this section. The Wagner source is not only the most musically similar, but its usage may be programmatically applicable when compared with the themes of family—and, perhaps even the marriage of Anna Alcott. Indeed, Anna Alcott (the oldest daughter of Bronson, born in 1831) was married in the parlor of Orchard House in 1860. Louisa May Alcott even noted her jealousy that Anna received a kiss from Emerson on that day, an anecdote that reflects the baffling juxtaposition between revolutionary philosophizing and family ritual that occurred daily under this roof. This Wagner source was first identified by Henry Cowell in his 1955 *Charles Ives and His Music*.[113] In this same book, Cowell suggested the traditional Scottish song "Loch Lomond" makes an appearance in the first strain.[114] The borrowing connection here is extremely debatable, as the musical

[112] All figures from: Block (E-Book), 51.
[113] Block (E-Book), 63.
[114] *Ibid*., 63.

resemblance is limited primarily to a similar descending motion, and the extramusical connection is essentially limited to both tunes being Scottish. The third, and perhaps most unlikely, borrowing source is the minstrel song "Stop that Knocking at My Door" (1843, Anthony F. Winnemore), which was first proposed by John Kirkpatrick in a 1973 handwritten note on his 1960 *A Temporary Mimeographed Catalogue*.[115] Because these two tunes really have only a brief ascending scale in common, and no specific extramusical connection, I strongly doubt the connection.[116]

Schubert, Symphony No. 9 in C major, mm. 1–3

App. 1, 1, *t*

faster

mp

Musical Example 4.9. Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," Human Faith Melody, 4th system of page 53[117]

While "Loch Lomond" and "Stop that Knocking at My Door" may not have been Ives's source material, they do accurately reflect the character of Ives's melody. Tunes played on a parlor piano in 1840-1860 would most likely have been church hymns, commercialized folk tunes found in music collections, and parlor songs, like those of Stephen Foster, that were

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[115] Block (E-Book), 63.

[116] Near the conclusion of his handbook's discussion of musical borrowing within the *Concord Sonata*, Block makes an impressive postulation connecting the first four notes of the "human faith melody" with the first four notes of Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 9. This connection may be coincidental, but Block provides extensive evidence that Ives would have been familiar with this work (Block (E-Book), 59). (SEE EXAMPLE 10).

[117] Top figure from: Block (E-Book), 59.

influenced by the minstrel tradition. By incorporating all three of these traditions into a generic composite, Ives delivers a strong impression of nostalgia.

One sentence in the "Alcotts" section of the *Memos* is particularly memorable: "And there sits the little old spinet-piano Sophia Thoreau gave to the Alcott children, on which Beth played the old Scotch airs, and played at the Fifth Symphony." The specific imagery of this phrase has surely sent scores of scholars before me scratching their heads while furiously flipping through pages. Perhaps the most succinct—and certainly entertaining—research on this subject was conducted by Kyle Gann. In his article on the spinet piano, he recounts an exhaustive search through primary documents concerning Sophia, "Beth" (Elizabeth, called "Lizzy"), and Bronson's collection of music. His conclusions are as such: (1) Within Orchard House, there is a square piano. Ives certainly would have known the difference between a spinet and a square piano. (2) Bronson's collection was primarily comprised of Italian opera, with no trace of anything by Beethoven or "old Scotch airs." (3) There is no record of the piano gifting.[118]

Whether or not this misinformation is Ives regurgitating an apocryphal truffle he gobbled up from a romantically embellished tour of the Orchard House, or whether this is Ives conjuring up the quaint image himself, this sentence has more value as a symbol than as a historical account. More important is the appearance of someone in Henry David Thoreau's family. Sophia

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[118] At the conclusion of his article, Gann hilariously adds: I am sorely tempted to forge, in neat, feminine handwriting, the following letter and slip it in among the Alcott archives:

Dear Louisa,

Today I had a rollicking good time ripping through the Kalkbrenner piano transcription of Beethoven's Fifth on the old spinet Sophie gave us, the score of which I then burned to make sure it didn't end up among daddy's papers at Harvard. MWA-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!!!

Your crazy sister,

Lizzy

Thoreau (1819-1876) was the younger sister of Henry, and she was the only one of his three siblings to outlive him.[119] She took dictations for Henry when as he lay on his deathbed and burnished his immortal legacy. She was a founder of the Concord Women's Anti-Slavery Society, a spinster, and an amateur painter and pianist.[120] She collected and processed botanical samples with her brother, and she sketched the image of a cabin found on the cover of *Walden*. She helped manage the family pencil-making business, and she gave piano lessons to the children in Concord. Although this biographical knowledge of Sophia was likely unknown to Ives, her appearance as a named character in the *Essays* is significant. She stands as a symbol of the invaluable role that many women played in the lives of these Concord transcendentalists. Although at various points in her life she was invariably steeped in the transcendental activities of her brother Henry, her domestic activities such as spinning, painting, and piano-playing epitomize the spirit of Orchard House that Ives attempts to capture in this middle section: the intensive discovery of eternal truths juxtaposed with the transitory activities of domestic living.

The appearance of a gentle ABAB form within the *Concord Sonata* is perhaps the most outré, but pleasant, moment in the piece. At the end of the second sounding of the second strain, Ives undermines the tonal stability and the piece accelerates into a transition section. Recalling the Jamesian "stream of consciousness," we certainly leave a "perching" section and enter a "flight." The first two systems (system 5, pg. 56 – system 6, pg. 57) of this flight feature descending scales (of no functional key) in the left hand in contrary motion with ascending scales in the right hand. The first system of page 57 has an ascending whole-tone scale. For a brief moment, we hear fragments of the "human faith melody":

[119] Petrulionis, 45.
[120] Sullivan, 34.

Musical Example 4.10. Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," Human Faith Melody fragments, 2nd system of page 57

While the left hand winds up and down in a whole-tone scale and then fluctuates between AM and BbM chords, the right hand makes a struggle to build a CM chord. After three attempts (see example 12), it achieves the CM triad. Out of this struggle bursts forth the "human faith melody" decked in regal chords in the final key of CM.[121] At the end of this gilded appearance of the "human faith melody" is the dominant G chord that leads into the final system of the movement.

[121] The ending key of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Musical Example 4.11. Ives, *Concord Sonata*, "The Alcotts," 3 attempts, Human Faith Melody, Beethoven synthesis, Human Faith Melody (1/2), 3rd – 5th system, Page 57

Ives delivers the most triumphant moment of the sonata with a gigantic sounding of the "5th" and *Hammerklavier* synthesis. After the Beethoven synthesis comes a brief echo of the "human faith melody" that ends on a Bb (its key from the beginning of the movement) that resolves to a soft CM chord.

I will never forget how moving it was to hear these musical ideas inside of Orchard House; there was an overwhelming sense of majesty and a humility that allowed me to feel

included within it. Ives's musical depiction of the spirit, space, and interpersonal dynamics of Orchard House traverses the entire spectrum of the many activities and interactions that occurred within. Embedded within the music may be representations of the innocence of the many children who lived and grew up in Orchard House, the balance of Bronson's erratic zeal and fervor with the respect and equilibrium of his wife, and the fantastic mélange of historical American figures including John Brown, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Thoreau who made essential appearances under the roof of Orchard House. Whether Ives gives us "Scotch airs" that wind their way through the rooms or uses the motto of inevitability and truth spoken by Beethoven in his Fifth Symphony, the music contained within this movement consistently reveals the excitement and diversity of the complex and invaluable cast of characters that make up Orchard House. The moments of unity speckled with dissonances and ghost notes represent the Orchard House's philosophical doctrines that clash in overlap. The rustic and unpolished nature that pervades the entirety of early American history is present in both the Orchard House and the network of the transcendentalists; inseparable to the unpolished nature, however, is the elegance and pride that comes through education and family heritage. The final glory of the grand "5th" chords are Ives's summary of the hub of political, educational, and philosophical thought that is Orchard House.

***

The most fascinating art explores the true nature of reality. These four compositions are among Charles Ives's many pieces that seek to explore reality's dissonance, and express that

"Vagueness, is at times, an indication of nearness to a perfect truth."[122] In these four place portrayals, Ives conjures a reality that cannot be confined to traditional rhythmic and harmonic systems; he recognized the beauty in the chaos of nature, and he strove to represent it musically. Each composition's "substance" is vibrantly projected through an ingenious combination of technical "manner."

In *The Pond*, its song version "Remembrance," *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, and its song version "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," Ives evokes a quasi-religious and sacred "substance" through the "manner" of hymn melody modeling. Although the identification of hymn sources in the melody of *The Pond* is perhaps more precarious than the clear quotation of "Dorrnance" in *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, both melodies follow contours that sound like hymns. This effect not only elicits a reverent atmosphere, but it also imbues these compositions with an American character. Another distinctly American moment is the "Taps" quotation at the end of *The Pond* and "Remembrance." Through this short musical fragment, Ives succinctly expresses his memory of his veteran father's funeral. As orchestral compositions, *The Pond* and *The Housatonic at Stockbridge* have greater textural capabilities than their song versions. Ives uses this advantage to create rather realistic models of a pond and a river. In both compositions, Ives captures the depth of these bodies of water with whole note drones in the lowest registers of the orchestra. He symbolizes the "substance" of vacillating, aqueous surfaces with similar techniques of "manner." In *The Pond*, the harmonic ambiguity of the bells and violins, as well as their rhythmic disconnection, conjures a murky texture evocative of a pond surface. A similar "manner" is used in *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, as unpredictable figures in the strings and upper layers of the orchestra float in gossamer textures like mists above the shifting surface of a

[122] *Essays*, 119.

river. The "manner" used in the upper registers in both of these compositions also serve to strengthen the "substance" of the murkiness of memory. Finally, through the use of canon in *The Pond* and "Remembrance," Ives memorializes his father's fascination with the effects of spatial distance on sound and creates a sense of temporal distance implicit to memory.

In *Over the Pavements*, Ives succeeds in capturing the "substance" of New York City's urban cacophony. He establishes an outdoor setting by selecting loud instruments (brass, winds, and a piano) for the instrumentation. His inspiration for this "take-off" was a fascination for the overlapping rhythms he observed in crowds of walking people, and he musically represents this "substance" with a heavy focus on out-of-sync rhythmic groups. Ives also references his childhood musical experiences with the inclusion of his piano-drumming technique and an unorthodox piano exercise taught to him by his father in the cadenza. Finally, there is a satirical imitation of ragtime that dates *Over the Pavements* in its turn-of-the-century American time period. A high level of non-imitative polyphony and an unprecedentedly dense concentration of harmonic dissonance shocks the listener with a resultant cacophonous texture. Although such a jarring listening experience may represent Ives's shock with the noise of the big city, the fact that he made organized music out of the chaos seems to indicate his adaptability and subsequent success as a New Yorker.

In "The Alcotts" movement of the *Concord Sonata*, Ives vibrantly portrays the "substance" of Orchard House. He quotes the opening motive from Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* in a chordal, hymn-like progression to give the movement a regal and perennial quality with a pervading tone of serenity. This focus on a warm delivery of Beethoven's message reflects his understanding of Orchard House as a place where the bold claims of transcendental philosophy were communicated with love. His portrait of Orchard House is not unrealistically serene,

however, and he includes a heated argument between its philosophizing inhabitants. This ruckus is quelled by a middle section that synthesizes popular ballad and hymn styles into a tonally traditional pacification, which represents reconciliation through the bonds of familial love—there is even a clear quotation of the Wedding March from *Lohengrin*. The movement ends with a grand delivery of melodic materials followed by a soft cadence.

Through an examination of Ives's different place portrayals, certain recurring "manner" techniques emerge, namely: (1) the "substance" of nature's randomness expressed through the "manner" of unpredictable melodic figures, unstable harmonies, and overlapping rhythmic units in multiple instrumental layers, (2) the "substance" of sanctity expressed through the "manner" of hymn quotation and imitation, and (3) the establishment of historical context through stylistic or direct quotation. (FOOTNOTE: For example, the "Taps" quotation in *The Pond*/"Remembrance" references the death of his Civil War veteran father, the ragtime coda in *Over the Pavements* references the first decade of the 1900s, and the middle section of "The Alcotts" references mid-19th century music.) Although this study has isolated a few of the recurring "manner" techniques, there are many others in the oeuvre of Charles Ives. Perhaps a more comprehensive study of his techniques of "manner" in place portrayal would yield a clearer answer to the unquestionably American quality of his music.

This study was conducted with traditionally academic means of research, but there is also something to be said for experiencing this music in the places which inspired Ives. One can read descriptions, view photographs, and—in the case of Ives—hear musical impressions of physical places, but there is great value in visiting these places in order to experience their "substance" before analyzing their various artistic depictions. *The Pond*, "Remembrance," *Scherzo: Over the Pavements*, *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," and "The

Alcotts," all stand as unique musical portraits and beautiful contributions to American art. Ives's innovative compositional techniques, combined with an iconoclastic disenchantment toward tired idioms, became invaluable prophetic harbingers for twentieth century classical music.

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