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## Bantock and Southey: musical otherness and fatalism in *Thalaba the Destroyer*

To the casual observer, connections between the British composer Granville Bantock (1868-1946) and the poet, historian and biographer Robert Southey (1774-1843), might be confined to broad issues of reception: both have suffered from being ‘unfashionable’, and both have remained undaunted in tackling projects whose scale might seem overwhelming to others. However, such a view underestimates the rich potential that an exploration of the Bantock-Southey interaction offers. Given that Southey’s revival, as W. A. Speck suggests, has centred upon a preoccupation with ‘orientalism and the “other”’ as part of a wider debate surrounding his imperialism,<sup>1</sup> we can use this ideological framework to contextualise

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<sup>1</sup> W. A. Speck, *Robert Southey: Entire Man of Letters* (New Haven & London, 2006), xvi. For various discussions of Southey’s writings in relation to orientalism and imperialism, see Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge, 1992); Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s ‘The History of British India’ and Orientalism* (Oxford, 1992), ‘Robert Southey and the Oriental Renaissance’, 47-86; Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient* (London, 1994), ‘Southey’s *Thalaba* and Christo-Islamic Ethics’, 43-133; Tim Fulford, ‘Pagodas and Pregnant Throes: Orientalism, Millenarianism and Robert Southey’, in Fulford (ed.), *Romanticism and Millenarianism* (New York, 2002), 121-38; Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* (Cambridge, 2006), “‘A Saracenic Mosque, not a Quaker meeting-house’: Southey’s *Thalaba*, Islam, and

Bantock and Southey's respective cultural beliefs, and to distinguish between their representations of the East.<sup>2</sup> In focusing upon one musical refiguring of Southey – Bantock's early unpublished 'orchestral poem' *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1899) – this article allows us to consider the specifics of Bantock's response to Southey's epic of the same name, and to explore two particularly important issues. First, building on discussions in literary scholarship of the complex representation of the Orient in Southey's poem, we can strip away Bantock's stylistic layers to reveal a range of musical 'otherness' that includes the adoption of musical tropes found in late nineteenth-century Russian music. Second, a focus on Bantock's musical structure – which can be clearly situated in relation to James Hepokoski's theory of sonata deformation – allows us to appreciate how the composer was able to project the 'manic fusion, the hell-bent coherentism' of Southey's 'overdriven narrative'.<sup>3</sup> In identifying

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religious nonconformity', 152-81; Carol Bolton, *Writing the Empire: Robert Southey and Romantic Colonialism* (London, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> For recent studies of Bantock's musical 'otherness', see Fiona Richards, 'Granville Bantock and the Orient of the Midlands', in Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (eds.), *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s-1940s: Portrayal of the East* (Aldershot, 2007), 129-46, and Yopie Prins, 'Sappho Recomposed: A Song Cycle by Granville and Helen Bantock', in Phyllis Weliver (ed.), *The Figure of Music in Nineteenth-Century British Poetry* (Aldershot, 2005), 230-58. Other recent attempts to reassess Bantock's status have focused upon his choral works, his early contribution to British concert life, and his specific interest in the musical refiguring of the dramatic monologue; see Mat Kickasola, 'Granville Bantock and the English Choral Imagination' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, 2009), Paul Watt, "'A gigantic and popular place of entertainment": Granville Bantock and Music-making at the New Brighton Tower in the late 1890s', *RMA Research Chronicle* 42 (2009), 109-64, and Michael Allis, 'Bantock and Browning: Reformulated dramatic monologue in *Fifine at the Fair*', *British Music and Literary Context: Artistic Connections in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2012), 133-88.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Tucker, *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse 1790-1910* (Oxford, 2008), 88.

Bantock as a strong reader of Southey's poem, his orchestral *Thalaba* is therefore revealed as a vibrant exploration of the relationship between musical text and paratext.

Southey's Arabian epic *Thalaba the Destroyer* was begun in 1799, finally appearing in 1801 as the first published example of his extended (and ultimately abortive) project to explore 'the most remarkable forms of Mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the ground work of a narrative poem'.<sup>4</sup> Although Southey did manage to complete three other works as part of this scheme – the Welsh-American epic *Madoc* (1794-99, revised, and published in 1805), the Hindu epic *The Curse of Kehama* (begun in 1801, published in 1810) and the mediaeval Spanish epic *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1809-14), from 1815 onwards his interests turned to historical writing – a shift from the 'emotional representation of his ideas to more rational, phenomenological representations.'<sup>5</sup> Subsequent editions of *Thalaba* published in Southey's lifetime appeared in 1809, 1814, 1821, 1829 (a pirate edition) and 1838; these incorporated a number of revisions, including the conversion of the expansive footnotes to endnotes and the inclusion of

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<sup>4</sup> Southey, preface to the 1838 edition of *The Curse of Kehama*, reproduced in Daniel Sanjiv Roberts (ed.), *The Curse of Kehama*, in *Robert Southey: Poetical Works 1793-1810* 4 vols (London, 2004), iv.3. Similarly, Southey wrote to Anna Seward, 28 May 1808, of his 'old design . . . to build a metrical romance upon every poetical faith that has ever been established, and have gone on after the Mahomedan in *Thalaba*, and the Hindoo in this present poem [*The Curse of Kehama*], with the Persian, the Runic, the Keltic, the Greek, the Jewish, the Roman Catholick and the Japanese'; see Kenneth Curry (ed.), *New Letters of Robert Southey* 2 vols (New York & London, 1965), i.476.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Meachen, 'History and Transcendence in Robert Southey's Epic Poems', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 19:4 (Autumn 1979), 591.

epigraphs in the second edition, an alternative layout in the third edition, and several alterations and additional notes in the 1838 edition.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the poem's influence on a younger generation of poets such as Shelley, Scott and Byron,<sup>7</sup> and its significant use (in the context of the gothic) of vampire imagery,<sup>8</sup> contemporary critics were broadly dismissive of Southey's *Thalaba*. Francis Jeffrey's twenty-page notice in *The Edinburgh Review* – seen by Southey as an 'attempt at Thalabicide'<sup>9</sup> – pointed to a 'feeble, low, and disjointed style' owing to a 'perverted taste for simplicity', a problematic versification – 'A jumble of all the measures that are known in English poetry, (and a few more), without rhyme, and without any sort of regularity in their arrangement . . . apt to perplex and disturb the reader' – and an 'ill-chosen subject . . . of the

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview of Southey's editorial changes, see Tim Fulford (ed.), *Thalaba the Destroyer*, in *Robert Southey: Poetical Works 1793-1810*, iii.xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>7</sup> See Fulford, *Thalaba the Destroyer*, xxiv-xxvii, and Marilyn Butler, 'Orientalism' in David B. Pirie (ed.), *The Romantic Period, The Penguin History of Literature 5* (London, 1994), 413-15.

<sup>8</sup> See Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh, 2000), 176-7, and James B. Twitchell, *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature* (Durham N.C., 1981), 35-6.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Southey to C. W. Williams Wynn, 4 February 1803, in Curry, i.306; his previous letter of 30 January 1803, *ibid.*, i.305, was even more scathing of Jeffrey's review: 'If it had not used the language of ridicule you and every one else would have felt its unfairness. What can be more unfair than the charge that there is no originality? than the assertion that [it] is made up of scraps of old sermons because I have imitated one simily [sic] from Bishop Taylor? than the reckoning it among the inconsistencies of the poem that a magician is "knocked down" by a sand shower of his own raising when the lines expressly say that pillar of sand was driven by the Breath of God? . . . I have heard something of the Reviewers. They are all young volunteers who set out with a resolution to abuse every thing because the English Reviews were all "milk and water."'

most wild and extravagant fictions'.<sup>10</sup> The *British Critic* was more virulent, describing a 'complete monument of vile and depraved taste . . . if fourteen copies are sold, and thirteen of the buyers do not repent their bargain, the world is more foolish than we could imagine.'<sup>11</sup> The *Edinburgh* did modify their views somewhat after the 1838 edition; citing *Thalaba* as the best of the epics, they highlighted Southey's 'singular powers of gorgeous description' and the poem's 'sustained spirit and rapidity of action', but remained critical of its lack of repose and its overt debt to 'book-learning' (although in the class of 'modern poets of a studious order' Southey ranked 'deservedly high').<sup>12</sup> Some were more convinced of the poem's merits; Charles Lamb apparently suggested that it contained 'more poetry, and manifest[ed] more care' than Southey's 1796 epic *Joan of Arc*, John Henry Newman characterised *Thalaba* as 'the most sublime of English Poems . . . I mean *morally* sublime' and identified its 'melodious' versification, and Dean Stanley was said to have 'devoured' *Madoc* and *Thalaba*, 'forming a love which he was always eager to avow for Southey's now much forgotten poetry'.<sup>13</sup> However, summaries of Southey's poetic status in later decades of the

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<sup>10</sup> 'Art. VIII. *Thalaba the Destroyer: A Metrical Romance.*', *Edinburgh Review* 1:1 (October 1802), 69, 68, 72, 74-5. The complete review is reproduced in Lionel Madden (ed.), *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage* (London & Boston, 1972), 68-90.

<sup>11</sup> 'Art. 17. *Thalaba the Destroyer.*', *British Critic* 18 (September 1801), 309-10.

<sup>12</sup> 'Art. IV.—The Poetical Works of Robert Southey', *Edinburgh Review* 68:138 (January 1839), 367, 364-5, 359, 360. See also 'Art. V. The Poetical Works of Robert Southey', *Eclectic Review* 4 (August 1838), 214, which highlighted the 'richness and beauty of the descriptions' as 'almost the only merit' of the epics.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from John Rickman (Southey's agent) to Southey, 27-30 December 1800, in Curry, i.237n; letter from Newman to J. M. Capes, 22 March 1850, in Charles Stephen Dessain (ed.), *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* 31 vols. (London, 1961-77), xiii.449; George Granville Bradley, *Recollections of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Late Dean of Westminster* (London, 1883), 19. William Taylor, a friend of Southey's, also penned a more positive unsigned review of *Thalaba* in the *Critical Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 39 (December 1803), 369-

nineteenth century noted that ‘his life will be found more worthy of study than the finest of his works’, that ‘his epics . . . are simply not read at all’ owing to the lack of ‘a spark of passion in his nature’, or that ‘judged by the highest standards, Southey’s poetry takes a midmost rank; it neither renders into art a great body of thought and passion, nor does it give faultless expression to lyrical moments.’<sup>14</sup>

Bantock was therefore one of a minority who appreciated *Thalaba*’s qualities. His interest in Southey can easily be situated in terms of his early penchant for the exotic – whether his initial intention to apply for the Indian Civil Service,<sup>15</sup> his projected series of six Egyptian dramas including *Rameses II* (published in 1892), early works such as the ballet *Egypt* (1892), the cantata *The Fire-Worshippers* (1892),<sup>16</sup> the opera *The Pearl of Iran* (1893), and the *Songs of the East* (1894-6), or his collection of ‘a wonderful assortment of beasts and

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79; although critical of the hero’s other-worldly nature, the sense that ‘the adventures do not enough grow out of one another’ (370), and the superfluous prepositions (372), Taylor highlighted the skilful ‘extended sweeps of description’ (372), and suggested (370) that on repeated readings, ‘the poem will be frequently interrupted, to give vent to interjections of applause, and to break loose into thrilling exultations of delight.’

<sup>14</sup> John Dennis, ‘Robert Southey’, *National Review* 8:48 (February 1887), 770; Charles Pebody, ‘Southey in his Study’, *Temple Bar* 42 (October 1874), 385; Edward Dowden, *Southey* (London, 1888), 194.

<sup>15</sup> According to Bantock’s secretary, Bantock had to abandon his preparations for the Indian Civil Service around 1884-5 because he was suffering from eye strain; see H. Orsmond Anderton, *Granville Bantock* (London, 1915), 16.

<sup>16</sup> ‘The Fire-Worshippers’, from the third part of Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*, is based upon Anquetil-Duperron’s *Zend-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre* (1771) – a work that Southey considered using as the basis of a Persian epic. Although the story focuses upon an attack upon the ancient Persians by the Arab Moslems, as Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 47-8, 93-100, suggests, Moore’s version can also be read as a denunciation of British rule in Ireland. Bantock’s decision to set this text might suggest his particular affinity with ancient Persia, particularly if other vocal works such as the *Five Ghazals of Hafiz* and the setting of Browning’s *Ferishtah’s Fancies* are taken into account.

other properties' following a world tour as conductor of the Gaiety Company in 1894-5.<sup>17</sup> Even before writing *Thalaba*, Bantock conceived the idea of using Southey's 1810 Hindu epic, *The Curse of Kehama*, as the basis for 'An orchestral drama in twenty-four scenes', matching the twenty-four divisions of Southey's poem. Unsurprisingly, this challenging project was abandoned, but Bantock did manage to complete a handful of these scenes – *The Funeral* (later retitled *Processional*), *The Recovery*, *The Separation*, *The Retreat* and *Jaga-Naut* (all for orchestra alone), and *The Curse* and *The Departure* for solo voices and orchestra.<sup>18</sup> Bantock's *Thalaba* can be seen as a development of the *Kehama* project, representative of the composer's growing confidence in reformulating extended poetic works in musical terms.

Instead of persisting with the *Kehama* scheme of a protracted scenic cycle incorporating text setting, in *Thalaba* Bantock decided to create a one-movement 'orchestral poem' to represent aspects of Southey's text.<sup>19</sup> Composed in the spring and summer of 1899,<sup>20</sup> *Thalaba* was premiered by Henry Wood on 4 May 1900 as part of the London

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<sup>17</sup> Anderton, 32. Granville Bantock and F. G. Aflalo, *Round the World with "A Gaiety Girl"* (London, 1896), 169, describe the composer as 'the proud possessor of an Australian parrot and an entertaining East Indian ape'.

<sup>18</sup> Manuscript sources for these scenes are housed at *GB-Bu* GB/4/1/6-15. *The Funeral* was published in 1894 and *The Recovery* and *The Curse* in 1896, but Bantock ordered the music plates to be destroyed, subsequently publishing *Processional* and *Jaga-Naut* as *Two Orchestral Scenes* in 1911 and 1912.

<sup>19</sup> A quotation cited in the programme note for the *Thalaba* premiere at the London Musical Festival (a copy of which is housed at Worcestershire Records Office, 705:462/4664/14), 'And then she spake' (VIII:332) suggests that Bantock's poetic source could not predate the second edition of 1809; quotations from the poem in this article therefore incorporate the revisions made in 1809 throughout where pertinent, with reference to the Fulford edition.

<sup>20</sup> Extant sources comprise the manuscript full score (*GB-Bu* GB/4/1/53), the manuscript piano score (*GB-Bu* GB/4/1/54) dated by Bantock '2/10/99 New Brighton', and brief sketch (*GB-Bu* GB/4/1/55); Ernest Newman's



Musical Festival, where it was programmed alongside Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* Suite, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and overtures by Wagner (*Tannhäuser*) and Weber (*Der Freischütz*). The *Monthly Musical Record* and *Musical Opinion* both suggested that it had made a 'good impression',<sup>21</sup> and although the *Musical Times* criticised the work's 'excessive length' and lack of delineation between the 'dramatic and the melodramatic', Bantock's treatment of the 'somewhat complicated Eastern story' was felt to be 'the best work he has produced so far'.<sup>22</sup> However, more problematic for some critics was the detailed nature of the musical representation:

The composer has in view a form of musical expression in which the orchestra may be regarded as a canvas upon which various pictures illustrating certain characters and situations in a given poem are depicted according to the development of the plot. Prominent ideas and dramatic episodes are associated with the themes, and there is hardly a phrase or modulation without its special significance tending to the elucidation of the subject.<sup>23</sup>

For the *Athenaeum*, this close reading of the poetic text created 'not a healthy specimen of English musical art, but a pseudo-mixture of Wagner and Liszt'; Bantock was guilty of

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programme note for a Liverpool performance, included in *GB-Bu* GB/4/1/53, confirms the 1899 date of composition. Bantock's musical representation of *Thalaba* was not the only attempt to translate the poem into an alternative art form. In August 1823, the Cobourg Theatre (later to become the Old Vic) performed a melodrama based on Southey's poem by Edward Fitzball. See 'Cobourg Theatre', *The Drama* 5:1 (August 1823), 41-3.

<sup>21</sup> 'London Musical Festival', *Monthly Musical Record* 30 (June 1900), 135; 'The London Musical Festival', *Musical Opinion* 23 (June 1900), 612.

<sup>22</sup> 'The London Musical Festival', *Musical Times* 41 (June 1900), 392.

<sup>23</sup> Reproduced in Newman's programme note, *GB-Bu* GB/4/1/53, and referred to by E.A.B. in 'The London Musical Festival. Some Symphonic Poems and a Moral.', *Musical Standard* 13 (12 May 1900), 289.

following the plot ‘too closely’, creating a work which seemed to ‘require the assistance of stage action’ and lacking the ‘clearness of outline, balance, and organic unity’ of absolute music.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the *Musical News* was clear about what was acceptable in using a poetic source as the basis for a musical composition:

Now, there are two ways open to the composer who takes a poem for his subject. He can, so to speak, impregnate himself with its spirit, and give us the resultant impressions left in his mind; or he can laboriously endeavour to fit themes to each of its personages and chief incidents, and strive to weave them into a coherent whole. The first undoubtedly is the right, albeit the narrow way, for music designed for the concert-room; but Mr. Bantock has adopted the second method, and if it has not led him to destruction, the initial mistake in conception is manifest . . . May we remind Mr. Bantock that the highest purpose of orchestral music is to stir the imagination of the listener in healthy directions, and not to cultivate a faculty to connect what is heard with a fixed programme through the medium of labelled themes.<sup>25</sup>

This conception of programme music was immediately challenged by Bantock:

You lose sight . . . of the fact that art is progressive and capable of expansion, particularly the art of music, and it appears that at the present time pedagogism has much to answer for, in seeking to retard the legitimate efforts of the pioneers . . . you admit a prejudice and partiality opposed to the growing tendency of the age, which seeks the expression of more concrete ideas and a more thorough investigation into the claims of “programme music.” After all is said and done, music remains the ideal expression of the emotions, rather than a means for obtaining alphabetical degrees, and it matters not whether we choose to regard it as subjective or objective, so long as it justifies its existence.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ‘Music: The Week’, *Athenaeum* 3785 (12 May 1900), 602.

<sup>25</sup> ‘London Musical Festival’, *Musical News* 18 (12 May 1900), 447.

<sup>26</sup> Letter, 12 May 1900, in *Musical News* 18 (26 May, 1900), 502.

However, the *Musical News* was unrepentant, citing overtures by Beethoven, Weber and Mendelssohn, along with the opinions of Eduard Hanslick and Farley Newman as to the limits of dramatic power in music, in identifying competing narratives of progress as part of a divide between critics and composers:

We cannot see that the art of music is either progressing or expanding when it feels impelled to call to its aid another art, whether that be painting, elocution, drama, or even the art of programme-printing, which last is the one most usually called upon for assistance by modern musicians . . . Our regret was that so many of our composers are exalting “programmes” at the expense of “absolute” music, and thus, we feared, retarding instead of assisting the development of English *music* as apart from drama, or picture, or programme.<sup>27</sup>

These sentiments were echoed by the *Musical Standard*. Warning that ‘a symphonic-poem should not go beyond the province of music’, they suggested that *Thalaba* suffered from a ‘kaleidoscope’ effect – Bantock had ‘crowded his canvas with ideas’, some of which were ‘too realistic for absolute music’, creating ‘a musical drama without the connecting link and explanation of action and voice.’<sup>28</sup> Although this journal modified its opinion after a performance conducted by Bantock in Liverpool on 8 February 1902,<sup>29</sup> it was left to the critic

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<sup>27</sup> *Musical News* 18 (2 June 1900), 512. On 9 June, 546, however, the same journal suggested that of the works performed in the London Musical Festival, only Coleridge Taylor’s *Hiawatha* overture, Bantock’s *Thalaba* and Camille Chevillard’s *Le Chêne et le Roseau* ‘alone have any such merit as would entitle them to lasting remembrance.’

<sup>28</sup> E. A. B., ‘The London Musical Festival’, 289.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Music in the Provinces’, *Musical Standard* 17 (15 February 1902), 110, which described ‘an exceedingly clever tone picture which cannot but enhance his [Bantock’s] reputation as one of the most earnest of modern British composers’, despite a ‘tendency to overload the brass department . . . that ought to be checked and which time and further experience will no doubt modify.’ See also ‘Music in Liverpool and District’, *Musical Times* 43

Ernest Newman to offer a more strident defence of *Thalaba* in particular and programme music in general. Proclaiming that ‘The day of abstract music is gone’, and that only ‘the opera and the symphonic poem’ now bore ‘the seed of life’, Newman highlighted Bantock’s growing confidence in composing works with a poetic basis:

the [*Thalaba*] themes are models of expressiveness, the orchestration has the positive, inevitable quality only seen in works that come forth in white heat, and the whole scheme of the poem is finely conceived and well followed out. . . . The only weak points in the work are just those which, one is glad to see, are fast disappearing from Mr. Bantock’s music. *Thalaba* is, in the first place, too long; in the second place, it has not yet quite solved, in the working out of the themes, the problem of the compromise between the old formulas and the new, between the necessity of not losing sight for a moment of the poetical current, and the need for a more or less decorative treatment of the musical matter that has been presented. Here and there in the *Thalaba* one sees quite clearly the struggle between the two unreconciled elements.<sup>30</sup>

Despite Newman’s reservations, Bantock’s reading represents a striking musical refiguring of Southey’s poem. The distinctive structure of Bantock’s *Thalaba* – a novel response to the narrative drive of Southey’s text and the inevitability of its plot – will be explored in relation

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(1 March 1902), 190, and ‘Musical Notes’, *Monthly Musical Record* 32 (March 1902), 53. *Thalaba* was also included in a concert of British music in Antwerp, 27 February 1901, alongside works by Cuthbert Hawley, Frederick Corder, Joseph Holbrooke, J. D. Davies and Elgar. The only commercial recording of the work is by Vernon Handley and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on Hyperion CDS44285.

<sup>30</sup> Ernest Newman, ‘The New School of British Music. III. Granville Bantock’, *The Speaker* 5:118 (4 January 1902), 385-6.

to James Hepokoski's theory of sonata deformation in due course, but first we need to situate Bantock's musical 'otherness' in the context of the poem's Orientalism.

### ***Thalaba* and 'otherness'**

The story of *Thalaba*, which spans over six thousand lines in twelve books, is briefly as follows. The poem begins with Thalaba and his mother Zeinab wandering in the desert; all Thalaba's siblings, along with his father, Hodeirah, have been murdered by the Dom Daniel because of fate's decree that one of Thalaba's family will destroy them. The death-angel Azrael grants Zeinab's wish to die, but he spares Thalaba, as he has been chosen 'To do the will of Heaven; / To avenge thy Father's death, / The murder of thy race' (I: 663-5), and reminds him: 'remember Destiny / Hath marked thee from mankind!' (I: 668-9). Thalaba is brought up by the Bedouin Moath and his daughter Oneiza, but soon faces several perilous adventures. The first threat comes from the evil spirit Abdaldar, who has been sent by the Dom Daniel to murder Thalaba. However, he is thwarted by a desert wind, and Thalaba takes Abdaldar's ring, which gives him power over the spirit world. The sorcerer Lobaba, in disguise as a merchant, diverts Thalaba into the wilderness, but the whirlwind that he invokes to kill Thalaba destroys the sorcerer instead. Another evil spirit, Mohareb, disguised as a warrior, leads Thalaba to the 'cave of punishment' at the mouth of Hell, but Thalaba dispatches him into the 'black abyss' – into which he also throws Abdaldar's ring, 'Magic's stolen aid', trusting instead in the 'righteous will of Heaven' (V: 450, 458). Although temporarily distracted from his avenging quest by an earthly paradise of 'glittering tents' and 'odorous groves', Thalaba manages to eschew temptation, and even saves a woman from ravishment, who turns out to be Oneiza. Thalaba kills the ruler of the paradise (Aloadin), is rewarded by the local Sultan, and marries Oneiza, but the angel of death visits Oneiza on their wedding night. A distraught Thalaba, now wandering aimlessly in the tombs, is

recognised by an old man who turns out to be Moath. A vampiric vision of Oneiza taunts Thalaba; Moath strikes the vision with his lance, whereby the ‘vampire corpse’ vanishes and the true spirit of Oneiza encourages Thalaba to resume his quest. Encountering an old woman who is spinning thread, Thalaba questions her claim that this thread cannot be broken, but as he winds it around his wrists he becomes powerless to remove it; the woman reveals herself as Maimuna, and with her sister Khwala, she takes Thalaba to the island of Mohareb as a prisoner. Thalaba refuses Mohareb’s exhortation to abandon his god, and is left to rot in the dungeons; however, Maimuna repents and sets Thalaba free. Another sorcerer, Okba (the actual murderer of Thalaba’s father), attempts to kill Thalaba, but Okba’s daughter Laila intervenes and is struck down by her father’s dagger. Her spirit is transformed into a green bird, who guides Thalaba to the ‘Ancient Bird’ Simorg.<sup>31</sup> Thalaba is finally directed to the land of the Dom Daniel, where he slays the remaining sorcerers, and is received into heaven by Oneiza.

Although any musical representation of *Thalaba* has to provide an effective summary of this driven plot (as discussed later), given that the Orient has been identified as ‘a creation’ with a ‘vital role’ in constituting Southey’s ‘religious, political, and aesthetic’ position,<sup>32</sup> central to any understanding of the poem is the complex nature and even contradictions of Southey’s ‘otherness’. As Nigel Leask suggests, contemporary reviewers of *Thalaba* were so struck by the ‘shifting, episodic narrative structure’ and the ‘exotic machinery and terminology’ as part of a ‘panoramic mode’, that they even ‘insinuated that Southey had gone

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<sup>31</sup> Bantock includes a reference to this creature in the third of his *Songs of Persia*, ‘The Simurgh’.

<sup>32</sup> Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 4.

over to the “other” side;<sup>33</sup> Leask cites the *Monthly Magazine*’s description of the poem’s ‘versatile instantaneity of pantomime scenery, from the blasted wilderness, to caverns of flame; from bowers of paradise, to cities of jewelry . . . figures, motley, new, and strange, causing palpitation, dance before the eye, and thwart the anxious grasp’.<sup>34</sup> This was despite the fact that several additional features tempered the ‘otherness’ as part of an imperialist discourse. Southey took his idea of the Dom Daniel from Robert Heron’s English translation of the *Arabian Nights* stories, for example, translating the evil sorcerer Maugraby into his own Mohareb; his poem therefore became ‘an imitation of “oriental” tales that were already imitations made in Europe.’<sup>35</sup> Carol Bolton suggests that not only is Thalaba a ‘fictional character, with no Islamic precedent’, but by relying upon ‘the dramatic effects of . . . intuitive faith’ rather than detailing the religious tenets of his protagonist, Southey was essentially creating a Protestant epic underpinned by ‘the authorial assumption of a shared belief system with his readership’, featuring ‘a pious hero . . . virtuous to the point of prudishness.’<sup>36</sup> More significantly, *Thalaba* represents a double text, as the poetic narrative is supported by a series of extended and detailed footnotes – described by Southey to Coleridge as being ‘numerous and explanatory of every out-of-the-way word or allusion in the text.’<sup>37</sup>

Marilyn Butler has highlighted the influential role of Erasmus Darwin’s two-part poem

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<sup>33</sup> Nigel Leask, “Wandering through Eblis”: absorption and containment in Romantic exoticism’, in Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (eds.), *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1870-1830* (Cambridge, 1998), 183-4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 184, taken from the *Monthly Magazine* 12:82 (January 1802), 582.

<sup>35</sup> Fulford, *Thalaba the Destroyer*, x.

<sup>36</sup> Bolton, *Writing the Empire*, 173-4; as Bolton notes, 188-9, Southey’s complex treatment of religious faith in *Thalaba* can be situated in relation to his growing suspicion of religious dogma, which later drew him closer to the Quaker faith.

<sup>37</sup> Curry, i.213, a letter of 1 January 1800.

*Botanic Garden* (1791) here in terms of a tradition of ‘annotated poetic . . . “romances” with . . . an antinarration in the form of footnotes’ representative of a ‘self-conscious modernity or a distancing intellectuality’ – a tradition that later included Scott’s *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and his *Waverley* novels, Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and *The Giaour*, Shelley’s *Queen Mab* and Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*.<sup>38</sup> Southey’s notes were problematic for contemporary critics; the *Edinburgh Review* suggested that it gave the impression of a book ‘entirely composed of scraps, borrowed from the oriental tale-books, and travels into the Mahometan countries, seasoned up for the English reader with some fragments of our own ballads, and shreds of our older sermons’, representative of ‘his common-place book versified.’<sup>39</sup>

In one sense, Southey’s reproduction of passages from writings such as Jean-Baptiste Tavernier’s *Collections of Travels Through Turkey [sic] into Persia, and the East Indies* (1684), Mahomet Rabadan’s *Mahometism Fully Explained* (1723-5) or C. S. Sonnini’s *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* (1799) in his *Thalaba* notes can be read as an attempt to make the otherness of the subject matter more intelligible or familiar to a Western audience (or, in Saidean terms, to ‘dominate ‘ and ‘have authority over’ the Orient via intellectual means)<sup>40</sup> – a condensed version of Southey’s own ‘crash course’ in Orient scholarship.<sup>41</sup> When *Thalaba* plays upon his reed-pipe in book III (‘While his skilled fingers modulate / The low, sweet, soothing, melancholy tones’) for example,<sup>42</sup> Southey quotes from Joseph

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<sup>38</sup> Marilyn Butler, ‘Culture’s medium: the role of the review’, in Stuart Curran (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to British Romanticism* (Cambridge, 1993), 129-30.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Art. VIII. *Thalaba the Destroyer*’, 77, 78.

<sup>40</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 2003), 32.

<sup>41</sup> Fulford, *Thalaba the Destroyer*, x.

<sup>42</sup> III: 322-3.



Morgan's *A Complete History of Algiers* (1728): 'The Arabs have the *Cassuba*, or cane, which is only a piece of large cane, or reed, with stops, or holes, like a flute, and somewhat longer, which they adorn with tassels [sic] of black silk and play upon like the German flute.'<sup>43</sup> However, Bolton describes how, in addition to making 'sweeping assertions, or imprecise associations, between fictional events and documented social and religious practices', Southey frequently 'denigrates his subject matter at every opportunity' as a 'counterbalance' to the poem's 'stimulating visions'.<sup>44</sup> Examples of this denigration appear as early as Book I. Explaining Zeinab's exclamation, 'praised be the Lord! / He gave, he takes away, / The Lord our God is good!',<sup>45</sup> for example, Southey notes:

I have placed a scripture phrase in the mouth of a Mohammedan; but it is a saying of Job, and there can be no impropriety in making a modern Arab speak like an ancient one . . . It had been easy to have made Zeinab speak from the Koran, if the tame language of the Koran could be remembered by the few who have toiled through its dull tautology. I thought it better to express a feeling of religion in that language with which our religious ideas are connected.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, the rich description of the 'stately palace' that rises in the air ('Fabric so vast, so lavishly enriched, / For Idol, or for Tyrant, never yet / Raised the slave race of man / In Rome, nor in the elder Babylon . . . Here studding azure tablatures / And rayed with feeble light, / Star-like the ruby and the diamond shone')<sup>47</sup> is undercut by the statement that 'A waste of ornament and labour characterises all the works of the Orientalists' – evidenced by

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<sup>43</sup> Fulford, *ibid.*, 220.

<sup>44</sup> Bolton, 175-6.

<sup>45</sup> I: 40-42.

<sup>46</sup> Fulford, *ibid.*, 193.

<sup>47</sup> I: 107-16.

the labour-intensive Persian manuscripts that conveyed ‘no idea whatever, as absurd to the eye as nonsense-verses to the ear.’<sup>48</sup> Elsewhere, there are derogatory asides concerning Mohareb’s reference to ‘spells to make . . . ruins . . . Disclose their secret wealth’ (‘The stupid superstition of the Turks with regard to hidden treasures is well known. It is difficult or even dangerous for a traveller to copy an inscription in sight of those barbarians’), or Okba’s habit of stargazing to predict fate in book X (‘It is well known how much the Orientalists are addicted to this pretended science’).<sup>49</sup> Not only is Southey critical of Eastern practices, but he takes the opportunity to suggest British supremacy over other races; describing the suffering of a deer hunted by Mohareb, Southey adds:

I saw this appearance of death at a bull-fight – the detestable amusement of the Spaniards and Portugueze. To the honour of our country, few Englishmen visit these spectacles a second time.<sup>50</sup>

Whilst some of Southey’s Western viewpoints might have ‘dialogically enriched’ Southey’s text, therefore, as Bolton argues they also ‘prevent[ed] the reader from engaging fully with the Islamic content.’<sup>51</sup> But the notes do have a close relationship with the poem in terms of the reading process: rather than viewing the two ‘texts’ as separate entities, Tucker suggests that the main poem imparts a pacing to the commentary symbolic of the progress of enlightened western colonialism:

The unstoppable momentum of Thalaba’s reckless quest is not finally checked by Southey’s ruthless notes. Rather, it takes them over, fusing with “the flow of the main story” the

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<sup>48</sup> Fulford, *ibid.*, 194.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 245, 288.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>51</sup> Bolton, 176-7.

westward course of empire . . . the spread of enlightenment, and the universal currency of instrumental reason . . . Passing through the occidental filter of French reason and subjected to English prosodic measure, the matter of Araby passes the redemptive test of time and runs the gauntlet of historical progress. So too may fallen “Bagdad” be saved from itself and restored to former glory, “when the enlightened arm / Of Europe conquers to redeem the East!”<sup>52</sup>

Not all otherness in Southey’s poem is subjected to criticism, however. Rather than positing the familiar binary model of ‘self’ and ‘other’, Bolton adopts Gayatri Spivak’s terminology to suggest a distinction between a ‘self-consolidating other’ (‘redeemable’, and representative of an otherness ‘more nearly “like” his own society’), and an ‘absolute other’ representative of difference, and therefore ‘inferior.’<sup>53</sup> The ‘redeemable’ other includes the Bedouins who look after Thalaba during his early development (‘It was the wisdom and the will of Heaven / That in a lonely tent had cast / The lot of Thalaba. / There might his soul develop best / Its strengthening energies; / There might he from the world / Keep his heart

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<sup>52</sup> Tucker, 91-2.

<sup>53</sup> Bolton, 185-6. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘The Rani of Sirmur’, in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen and Diana Loxley (eds.), *Europe and its Others: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature July 1984* vol.1 (Colchester, 1985), 131. Spivak’s ‘self-consolidating/absolute’ division is modified by John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven and London, 1991), 10, in his reading of de Quincey’s essay ‘The English Mail-Coach’, as ‘this, ‘that’ and ‘the other’, to link the apparently contrasting ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ on the Royal Mail coach, and to distinguish them from a rival Birmingham coach; Barrell’s modification, *ibid.*, ‘seems to dramatise how what at first seems “other” can be made over to the side of the self – to a subordinate position on that side – only so long as a new, and a newly absolute “other” is constituted to fill the discursive space that has thus been evacuated.’

pure and uncontaminate’),<sup>54</sup> a passage underscored a few lines later by this positive comment in Southey’s notes:

‘The Bedouins, who, at all points, are less superstitious than the Turks, have a breed of very tall greyhounds, which likewise mount guard around their tents; but they take great care of these useful servants, and have such an affection for them, that to kill the dog of a Bedouin would be to endanger your own life.’ *Sonnini*.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to the moderation and monogamy of the Bedouins, Bolton suggests, the evil sorcerers and the corrupt potentates presiding over a generally passive populace can be situated in relation to the absolute other. Bolton also identifies similar distinctions in relation to religious practice. Whilst the Bedouin family display a moving simplicity when at prayer, Southey contrasts the Islamic religious ritual for the crowds as a ‘duty-task’, where the Imam seeks to ‘influence’ the worshippers in ‘Azure and gold adornment’ of the overly-ornamented mosque.<sup>56</sup>

Any listener familiar with Southey’s tale would expect Bantock’s orchestral poem to be broadly representative of musical exoticism (even more so given the composer’s claim that ‘there is hardly a phrase or modulation without its special significance tending to the elucidation of the subject’),<sup>57</sup> and the musical material is inevitably interpreted with those expectations in mind. Bantock’s enthusiastic immersion in the practices and culture of the

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<sup>54</sup> III: 213-19.

<sup>55</sup> Fulford, *ibid.*, 215; Southey’s quotation is from C. S. Sonnini (trans. Henry Hunter), *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt: Undertaken by order of the Government of France* 3 vols. (London, 1799), i.285.

<sup>56</sup> See Bolton, 187, commenting on III: 295-311.

<sup>57</sup> Newman’s Liverpool programme note.

Eastern ‘other’ – whether his learning Sanskrit, his donning oriental dress, or his deliberate promotion of Eastern ‘texts’ in *Omar Khayyám*, the *Songs of the East*, and the *Five Ghazals of Hafiz* (not to mention his focus on ‘otherness’ elsewhere – such as the Persian ‘other’ in *Ferishtah’s Fancies*, or the gypsy ‘other’ in *Fifine at the Fair*) suggest no obvious parallels with Southey’s imperialist subtext.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, contemporary musical critics mirrored the early literary critics’ absorption with aspects of the ‘panoramic mode’ of the poem in their references to the destabilising elements of ‘otherness’ in Bantock’s score – the composer’s ‘being ‘so carried away by the story as to forget the wisdom of not saying too much’, his having ‘crowded his canvas’ with ideas that were ‘too realistic’, creating a ‘scrappy effect’ with ‘no main central idea’ and a ‘shallow facility’, or even a tendency to ‘overload the brass department’.<sup>59</sup> However, the general concept of competing levels of otherness in Southey’s poem has a particular resonance in Bantock’s orchestral poem, where two distinct

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<sup>58</sup> See also Bantock’s essay ‘Confucianism and Music’, *New Quarterly Musical Review*, 3:12 (February 1896), 157-64, where, 157, he highlights the relative musical progress of the East: ‘Music had reached a high state of excellence in the Eastern world long before it had made its appearance in the West’. In *Round the World with “A Gaiety Girl”*, 68, Bantock and Aflalo also chastise Sir Edwin Arnold, author of *Seas and Lands* (1891), for his ‘condemnation’ of San Francisco’s Chinatown district, revelling instead in the ‘enchanted bazaars’ and their ‘carved walking-sticks, silk handkerchiefs and sashes of gayest hue, elaborate water-pipes, perfumed joss-sticks, massive ivory chessmen, [and] jars of preserved ginger’.

<sup>59</sup> ‘The Week’, *Athenaeum*, 3785 (12 May 1900), 602; E. A. B., ‘The London Musical Festival’, 289; ‘Music in the Provinces’, *Musical Standard* 17 (15 February 1902), 110. Compare William Taylor’s description of Southey’s poem, *Critical Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 39 (December 1803), 369-70, as ‘a gallery of successive pictures’ where ‘the personages . . . are often almost lost in the scene . . . it leaves a strong, but a confused and confusing impression: the memory has attached to itself many a grand moment, many a terrible picture; but there is a want of concatenation, of mutual dependence, of natural arrangement . . . the fable somewhat wants cohesion’.

stylistic layers can be distinguished. Striking in its overt otherness, for example, is Bantock's representation of Oneiza (Ex.1), adopting scalic contours that incorporate two augmented seconds. This scale, identified by Liszt as a feature of Bohemian music,<sup>60</sup> has recently been renamed 'verbunkos minor' by Shay Loya;<sup>61</sup> however, as Loya suggests, 'the *verbunkos* scale is only a Gypsy or Hungarian scale if its explicit purpose is to represent such identities', as 'conceptualizing scales with such names does not imply any kind of cultural exclusion or exclusivity' – indeed, its contours might suggest associations with additional markers of 'otherness' such as the Algerian scale.<sup>62</sup> If as a Bedouin, Oneiza is part of Southey's 'redeemable' other with similarities to British society, in contrast Bantock prefers to revel in

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<sup>60</sup> Liszt, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (Paris, 1859), 223: 'D'ordinaire, elle prend dans la gamme mineure la *quarte augmentée*, la *sixte diminuée*, et la *septième augmentée*. Par l'augmentation de la quarte surtout, l'harmonie y acquiert des chatoiements souvent très-bizarres et d'un éclat offusquant. Les musiciens saisiront de suite en combien et en quoi cette triple et quasi constante modification des intervalles fait différer cette harmonie de la nôtre.' One wonders if Bantock was familiar with this work through Frederick Corder's teachings, given the latter's interest in Liszt; see, for example, Corder's Royal Institution lectures, described in 'Franz Liszt', *Musical Standard* 5 (30 May 1896), 348-9, or his book, *Liszt* (London, 1925).

<sup>61</sup> Shay Loya, *Liszt's Transcultural Modernism and the Hungarian-Gypsy Tradition* (Rochester, 2011), 54; the scale is also discussed in Jonathan Bellman, 'Towards a Lexicon for the Style hongrois', *The Journal of Musicology* 9:2 (Spring 1991), 234-6, Derek B. Scott, 'Orientalism and Musical Style', *The Musical Quarterly* 82:2 (Summer 1998), 312-3, and Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2009), 142.

<sup>62</sup> Loya, 10, 52; for the Algerian scale, see Robert Fink and Robert Ricci, *The Language of Twentieth Century Music: A Dictionary of Terms* (New York, 1975), 3. Other Bantock works incorporating two augmented seconds in different scalic formulations to represent a sense of 'other' include the ballet music *Egypt* (1892), the 'symphonic overture' *Saul* (1894), 'In the Harêm' and 'Zal' from *Songs of Persia* (c.1898), and 'The Odalisque' from *Songs of the Seraglio* (1913).

this character's greater musical difference – deliberately marking Oneiza as representative of an overt otherness within the *Thalaba* music that contrasts with surrounding material. This can be seen as part of the composer's attempt to augment Oneiza's poetic status in the orchestral poem, as Bantock adopts a transformation of her theme towards the end of the work (where her otherness is tempered) to represent Thalaba's knowledge 'that his death-hour was come' (Ex.2), highlighting the lovers' reunion in death as some personal happiness for the hero once his quest is complete. This musical focus upon a relatively minor character as part of a dominant quest narrative might also be compared to the 13-page discussion of Oneiza's status in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1835;<sup>63</sup> confirming Oneiza's death as inevitable (as she temporarily deflects Thalaba from his quest), this article offers a sympathetic view – although she 'had heard' Thalaba's tale concerning his quest (and therefore should have been aware of its implications), 'in her perfect happiness, as she and Thalaba grew up together, she had forgotten it.'<sup>64</sup>

If Oneiza's music can be situated firmly in terms of an intensely overt 'other', there is a contrasting 'near-eastern' quality elsewhere in *Thalaba*, suggestive of a gestural rhetoric found in the music of Tchaikovsky. Although the scalic exoticism exhibited in Oneiza's theme can be found in examples of Russian music elsewhere, such as Rachmaninov's First Symphony (1895), or Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le coq d'or* (1908),<sup>65</sup> Bantock seems to be making

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<sup>63</sup> 'The Female Characters in our Modern Poetry', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 38:237 (July 1835), 128-41.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>65</sup> See Carl Dahlhaus (trans. J. Bradford Robinson), *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley, 1989), 300. One also wonders whether Bantock was familiar with other Russian works employing a scalic exoticism, whether Balakirev's *Tamara*, performed at a Lamoureux concert at the Queen's Hall on 18 April 1896 and described in the *Musical News* 10 (25 April 1896), 390, as 'at times quite Asiatic in character', Rimsky Korsakov's

a distinction in *Thalaba* between Oneiza's more exotic Bedouin musical identity (highlighted by its musical stasis) and a Tchaikovskian trope associated with *Thalaba* and the momentum of the quest. Assessing British responses to Tchaikovsky's music towards the end of the nineteenth century is not straightforward, given the complexities of the reception of Russian culture in general. Boundaries between West and East were somewhat blurred; as writers such as Philip Bullock and Larry Wolff have suggested, depending upon 'accidents of friendship and circumstance, individual taste and ideologies', Eastern Europe could be placed somewhere 'on the developmental scale that measured the distance between civilization and barbarism' as representative of a more or less acceptable other.<sup>66</sup> In the case of Tchaikovsky, whilst broadly supportive of the beauty of Tchaikovsky's lyrical writing and his rhythmic originality, British musical critics were initially divided over his emotional range and orchestral rhetoric. Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, for example, was often viewed as the acceptable face of barbarism at the turn of the century. The *Musical Times* could praise its 'barbaric splendour and passion';<sup>67</sup> similarly, the *Musical Standard* highlighted the 'intensely passionate, barbaric episode which follows the crash after the first statement of the well-

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Symphony no.2, *Antar*, performed at a Lamoureux-Chevillard concert in Paris in January 1898, or in a B minor context, Borodin's Symphony no.2, which had its London premiere on 27 February 1896.

<sup>66</sup> See Philip Ross Bullock, *Rosa Newmarch and Russian Music in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century England* (Farnham, 2009), 20, and Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994), 13. Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: 'The East' in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis, 1999), 86-99, discusses European perceptions of Russia in the nineteenth century as 'the barbarian at the gate' given her 'ambiguous presence on Europe's border, a presence that could be associated with Europe but also with China' (92).

<sup>67</sup> 'Richter Concerts', *Musical Times* 36 (July 1895), 455.



known melody' in its first movement,<sup>68</sup> or more broadly, the 'superlatively beautiful and puissant expression [given] . . . to the animal, to the vestige of the savage in us: to that lamentation over the precious things of the sensual life which, communicating its panic and despair to all who hear, diverts the eyes from the vision of those immutable things by virtue of whose perception alone do we approach the gods'.<sup>69</sup> However, only a few years earlier, the same *Musical Standard* was troubled by the 'reek of the theatre' and the 'insistent and wearying employment of instruments of percussion' that dominated the *Manfred* Symphony, allowing the 'commonplace and poetry, Slavonic barbarism and German culture' to 'alternate and commingle with ever shifting kaleidoscopic hues',<sup>70</sup> along with the sense of 'cataclysmal upheaval, a great tornado of passion that uproots everything it encounters' in the *Romeo and Juliet* overture.<sup>71</sup> Further excesses were identified in Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony:

In the last movement . . . one is never safe from the big drum and his satellites; at any moment they are liable to swoop down on the unhappy listener, and shatter his nerves with an ear-splitting cannonade. It is very magnificent, but it is very brutal, and I shivered with apprehension every time I saw the bass-trombonist rise from his seat with that menacing aspect peculiar to brass instrument players.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Vivian Carter, 'Had Tchaikovsky No Style? A Reply to Mr Ashton's Letter', *Musical Standard* 18 (15 November 1902), 303.

<sup>69</sup> 'Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky and the Idea of Death', *Musical Standard* 20 (29 August 1903), 136.

<sup>70</sup> 'Tchaikovsky's "Manfred" Symphony', *Musical Standard* 10 (1 October 1898), 215.

<sup>71</sup> 'A Tchaikovsky Concert', *Musical Standard* 9 (29 January 1898), 70.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* See also 'A Protest Against Tchaikovsky', *Musical Standard* 10 (24 December 1898), 409-10, which reproduced a particularly aggressive anti-Tchaikovsky diatribe in the form of a short story originally published in the December 1898 edition of the American journal *The Etude*. British periodicals also explored the imagery of 'barbarism' in relation to other Russian composers; see Stephen Muir, "'About as Wild and Barbaric as well

In the context of this range of opinion that characterised early Tchaikovsky reception in nineteenth-century Britain, Bantock was clearly an admirer. This admiration can be dated at least from 1893, given the description by Bantock's daughter Myrrha of his reaction to the London visit of Tchaikovsky in that year:

My father was so enthralled by those of Tchaikovsky's works included in the programme that he made up his mind to meet the great composer. He searched the hotels of London until he found him.

'What can I do for you?' asked Tchaikovsky in French, when the young man had presented himself. Granville, pale with excitement and enthusiasm, spoke of his determination to become a composer himself.

'Then you must be prepared to work hard,' said the great man.<sup>73</sup>

If Bantock did attend Tchaikovsky's London concert of June 1893, he would have heard the British premiere of the Fourth Symphony, and one wonders whether the domination and frequent interruptions of the 'Fate' motif throughout the work was something that Bantock had at the back of his mind when adopting his own brass-orientated 'destiny' motif in *Thalaba*.<sup>74</sup> However, there are striking parallels between *Thalaba* and one popular

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could be Imagined . . .": The Critical Reception of Rimsky-Korsakov in Nineteenth-Century England', *Music & Letters* 93:4 (November 2012), 513-42.

<sup>73</sup> Myrrha Bantock, *Granville Bantock: A Personal Portrait* (London, 1972), 30-31. In the 1940s Bantock published a plethora of Tchaikovsky arrangements, including those for solo pianoforte of themes from the Fifth and Sixth symphonies and the *Romeo and Juliet* overture, and the ballets *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Princess* (all 1942-3), and a piano arrangement of *The Nutcracker* (1946); in 1952 he published the song album *Sing with Tchaikovsky* where his wife Helena provided lyrics to some of Tchaikovsky's 'popular themes'.

<sup>74</sup> For an overview of British reception of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, see Gerald Norris, *Stanford, the Cambridge Jubilee and Tchaikovsky* (Newton Abbot, 1980), 353-8; David Brown, *Tchaikovsky: A Biographical*

Tchaikovsky work performed frequently in late nineteenth-century Britain: the already-mentioned Sixth Symphony Op.74.<sup>75</sup> Not only does this work share the key of B minor with *Thalaba* (in addition to extra-musical associations),<sup>76</sup> but there are a number of additional thematic and gestural parallels. There are, for example, similarities between Bantock's 'Thalaba' theme and the primary theme of the *Allegro non troppo* in Tchaikovsky's first movement (Ex.3) – not only the turn motif 'x' and the presence of the diminished seventh chord (albeit in a different bar), but the subsequent momentum generated by semiquaver material and offbeat accents (Ex.4) – a feature developed further by Tchaikovsky in his recapitulation.<sup>77</sup> The rhythmic dislocation in Bantock's *Thalaba* – where there is often uncertainty as to how many off-beat percussive interpolations are to be expected – has parallels with a technical aspect of Southey's poem highlighted by contemporary critics, as noted above: its versification – something that Tucker links to the poet's recreational use of nitrous oxide:

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*and Critical Study; To the Crisis (1840-1878)* (London, 1992), 'Volume II: The Crisis Years (1874-1878)', 163-9, provides a discussion of the 'fate' motif.

<sup>75</sup> The British premiere of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, conducted by Alexander Mackenzie, was at a Philharmonic Society concert on 28 February 1894; further early performances included 14 March 1894 (with the same performers), a Richter concert on 27 May 1895, a Henschel concert on 25 February 1897, a concert in Liverpool on 3 April 1897, and the Birmingham Festival in 1897, so Bantock had several opportunities to hear this work. Watt's Appendix, "'A gigantic and popular place of entertainment'", 145-64, confirms that Bantock conducted this work five times in his New Brighton concerts between 1898 and 1900.

<sup>76</sup> Rosa Newmarch, 'Rimsky Korsakov: A Biographical Sketch', *Musical Standard* 7 (6 March 1897), 152, referred to the 'tragic associations' of the Sixth Symphony; other potential Tchaikovsky B minor models with extra-musical associations obviously included the *Romeo and Juliet* overture and the *Manfred* Symphony.

<sup>77</sup> See Tchaikovsky, Symphony No.6, first movement, bars 246-9 and 254-8. Further similarities include the approach to the second theme in Tchaikovsky's symphony (bars 76-85) and Bantock's *Thalaba* (bars 177-84), both of which offer motivic repetition within a reduction of pace.

The gassy hilarity of this most conspicuous of Southey's contributions to High Romanticism takes effect notably at the level of style, in the unrhymed, purposely unenjambéd, irregularly metred iambs that he gathered into short, untaxing strophes as if to counter the experimental astringency of Landor.<sup>78</sup>

Another Tchaikovskian imprint adopted by Bantock involves sequential writing whose chromatic or scalic obsessions inject an emotional heightening. Although the passage where Oneiza's theme is disrupted by reminders of the quest (Ex.5a) might suggest parallels with the passionate recapitulatory space in Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* overture,<sup>79</sup> it is the slower music of the Sixth Symphony finale (Ex.5b) which offers a closer model in terms of the specific nature of the chromatic rise, the climax on an inversion of a B minor chord, and the ensuing scalic descent – even if initially Bantock injects a greater sense of angst through the use of semiquaver triplets.

These examples are not to suggest that Bantock's musical style in *Thalaba* can be dismissed simply as an imitation of Tchaikovsky's. Rather, Bantock seems to have explored selective Tchaikovskian tropes that offered effective models of musical momentum as part of a broad context of near-eastern other. These gestures served both to contrast with the exotic privileging of Oneiza, and to highlight the single-minded nature of Thalaba and his quest.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Tucker, 85.

<sup>79</sup> See Tchaikovsky, *Romeo and Juliet* overture, bars 467-70.

<sup>80</sup> Just as the 'otherness' of these Tchaikovskian tropes is lessened by their juxtaposition with the Oneiza material, Rosa Newmarch, *ibid.*, suggested that Tchaikovsky's 'otherness' was relative in terms of Russian music: 'We consider him [Tchaikovsky] intensely Russian, but in reality what we admire in him is his cosmopolitan tendency . . . for full-flavoured Muscovite music we must turn to [the works] of Balakirev, Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov.'

Significantly, when Thalaba realises he will be united with Oneiza in death (Ex.2 above), the transformation of Oneiza's theme used to represent this pivotal moment tempers her scalic otherness, adopting Thalaba's diminished seventh as a final resolution of the conflict between Thalaba's love-interest and the quest in hand. The result echoes thematic and harmonic gestures from the secondary material of the Sixth Symphony first movement (Ex.6) – music whose D major stasis, as in Bantock's *Thalaba*, offers a contrast to the dramatic material that surrounds it. Just as more recent literary scholarship has peeled away the complexities of 'otherness' in Southey's poem, therefore, so we might as listeners now appreciate these competing notions of 'otherness' in Bantock's *Thalaba*.

### ***Thalaba*, epic fatalism and musical structure**

In addition to Southey's complex layers of 'otherness', a second striking feature of the poem is the relentless quality of its plot, and the central theme of divine retribution:

The poem pursues Thalaba's quest and nothing but; by the same token, Thalaba *is* his mission. Inscribing a pattern that has descended in our time to the likes of James Bond and Rambo, Thalaba's character embodies pure agency, whereby antecedents and affections fall away to expose a naked will that, being stripped of properties, is not in any meaningful sense his own.<sup>81</sup>

Given the inevitability of the quest, anything which threatens to deflect the hero from his destiny is therefore only a temporary distraction, as 'paradises pall, pleasures crumble, associates betray, and drop-dead beauties keep doing just that.'<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Southey, writing to C. W. Williams Wyn in 1803 on the topic of 'intermingling description and narrative', agreed that 'if in *Thalaba* there be any description which does not carry on the narrative at the same

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<sup>81</sup> Tucker, 86.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

time, it is a fault and must be expunged.’<sup>83</sup> Herbert Tucker highlights the events of the tenth book in particular as representative of a ‘plot that has been looped all along in gyres of self-fulfilling prophecy’:

Okba produces an astrological decree requiring the death of either Thalaba or Laila (his new best girl, and Okba’s daughter); Thalaba prepares to go under the knife, but then Laila, intervening, receives the fatal wound instead. This is what passes for irony in the *Thalaba* plot, which not only disables all merely intermediate causation, but leaves characters, Thalaba most of all, helplessly alone in a world so charged with fatality as to render human initiative irrelevant.<sup>84</sup>

In appreciating Bantock’s musical representation of this driven plot, it should be noted that the composer reproduced the fatalistic quotation from *Thalaba* at the front of his manuscript piano score – “Remember Destiny hath mark’d thee from mankind!”<sup>85</sup> One might also highlight the frequency with which Bantock’s ‘destiny’ motif (listed as (e) in Figure 2, below) punctuates the musical narrative. However, the obsessional nature of Bantock’s *Thalaba* derives principally from its structure. This can be understood as an example of James Hepokoski’s familiar concept of sonata deformation, where deviations from what might be generally understood as the *Formenlehre* sonata form structure might be seen in terms of a dialogue with sonata norms, even if ‘some of the most important features of those [generic] expectations are not realized.’<sup>86</sup> On a basic level, the relative sizes of

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<sup>83</sup> Letter from Southey to C. W. Williams Wynn, 30 January 1803, in Curry, i.304.

<sup>84</sup> Tucker, 88.

<sup>85</sup> *GB-Bu GB/4/1/54*. In a letter to Grosvenor Charles Bedford dated 12 May 1805, discussing the potential dramatization of *Thalaba*, Southey confirmed that this warning was ‘essential to the poem’; see Curry, i.384.

<sup>86</sup> James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No.5* (Cambridge, 1993), 5. For criticisms of the sonata deformation concept, see Julian Horton, ‘Bruckner’s Symphonies and Sonata Deformation Theory’, *Journal of the Society*

sections within Bantock's sonata frame in *Thalaba* are striking (Figure 1); the fact that the recapitulatory space represents over half the orchestral poem creates an end-focused structure. Of the most common deformational procedures in nineteenth-century repertoire listed by Hepokoski,<sup>87</sup> the first obvious example is the use of an episode (*Thalaba*'s temptations) within the developmental space.<sup>88</sup> Although the *Poco Lento* stasis at the beginning of Bantock's development section almost suggests the eighteenth-century 'slow-movement episode/slow movement as development',<sup>89</sup> subsequent harp arpeggiations (representing Southey's dancing girls) introduce more momentum; and the reference to

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*for Musicology in Ireland* 1 (2005-6), 5-17, who questions the idea of 'an agreed theoretical norm' (8), suggesting that 'deformations' simply represent 'reformations of the classical principle' as part of a dialectic that is 'the norm of its time' (12), and Paul Wingfield, 'Beyond "Norms and Deformations": Towards a Theory of Sonata Form as Reception History', *Music Analysis* 27:1 (2008), 137-77, who, 148-55, highlights various difficulties of 'viewing sonata form as a genre', including questions of how a composer is 'supposed to know that a particular design is generically prohibited at a given time', 'how uncommon a procedure has to be for it to become a deformation', and problems of clarity in terms of the relationship 'between compositional practice and theory'.

<sup>87</sup> Hepokoski, 6-7; this listing includes the 'breakthrough deformation', where the introduction of a musical idea (normally in the Development section) subsequently affects the nature of the Recapitulation; the 'introduction-coda frame', where a framing identity encases an inner sonata; the inclusion of episodes within the developmental space; the 'strophic/sonata hybrid' where a sonata process might be understood as a replaying of musical events akin to a modified strophic song structure; and examples where markers and gestures from different movements are fused together – 'multimovement forms in a single movement'.

<sup>88</sup> Hepokoski, *ibid.*, highlights Weber's *Euryanthe* overture, Wagner's *Tannhäuser* overture and Brahms's *Tragic* overture as 'developmental spaces with interpolated single episodes', and double-episode models in Berlioz's *Les francs-juges* overture, Liszt's *Tasso*, Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* and several of Strauss's tone poems.

<sup>89</sup> See James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford, 2006), 220-1, which includes examples such as Mozart's overture to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, K.384 and the first movement of Haydn's Symphony no.45, 'Farewell'.

motifs from the introduction and exposition (providing at least some sense of ‘development’) allows the episode to be perceived as an extended intrusion into the developmental space. Bantock cultivates the episodic nature of the orchestral poem further by inserting a second episode (Thalaba’s wandering) in the recapitulatory space before the coda, and subsequently bisecting his coda with a third episode (the spinning scene); these episodes are all representative of deflections from Thalaba’s central quest.

In terms of tonality, rather than adopting a familiar *per aspera ad astra* tonal narrative by beginning in a minor key and ending in a redemptive major, as the schemata in Figure 1 shows, Bantock retains his opening B minor tonality at the end of *Thalaba*. Warren Darcy suggests in his study of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony that ‘when a minor-mode work remains locked in its original negativity by proving incapable of breaking through into major, one might say that the *Erlösung* paradigm is thwarted or “fails” in some way’.<sup>90</sup> In *Thalaba*, the retention of the minor in the final bars simply reiterates the sense of unrelenting fate within the narrative, suggestive of an uncompromising tonality only occasionally diverted by external events and characters; the relative major appears briefly prior to these final bars (when Thalaba realises that his death is approaching) suggestive of Thalaba’s personal redemption, but this is very much secondary to the central narrative of the quest. The treatment of Oneiza’s tonal area is also significant. Despite her initial association with the distinctive tonal centre of E minor in the Exposition, she is subsequently subsumed within Thalaba’s B minor some 53 bars later, symbolising his power over her fate. And although her tonal inflection from E minor to E major in the recapitulation reflects her moment of married bliss, this is only a brief delusion; her subsequent demise is represented by G minor, creating a tertiary link between Thalaba’s tonality and her own.

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<sup>90</sup> Warren Darcy, ‘Rotational Form, Teleological Genesis, and Fantasy-Projection in the Slow Movement of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony’, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 25:1 (Summer 2001), 50.



Although the traditional sonata divisions are observed within Bantock's musical structure, on closer inspection the work might be better understood in relation to another deformational procedure related to Hepokoski's 'strophic/sonata hybrid' family: rotational form – a concept which has underpinned several recent studies of the music of Sibelius, Mahler, Bruckner, Elgar and Vaughan Williams.<sup>91</sup> A structure based upon a rotational principle is best explained as a cyclical replaying of musical events. After establishing a 'referential statement' of 'differentiated figures, motives, themes', subsequent rotations typically rework and modify this statement with greater or lesser degrees of flexibility:

Second (and any subsequent) rotations normally rework all or most of the referential statement's material, which is now elastically treated. Portions may be omitted, merely alluded to, compressed, or, contrarily, expanded or even 'stopped' and reworked 'developmentally'. New material may also be added or generated. Each subsequent rotation may be heard as an intensified, meditative reflection on the material of the referential statement.<sup>92</sup>

A sense of teleological process might also be present, however, where a 'brief motivic gesture or hint planted in an earlier rotation' can be 'ultimately unfurled as the telos, or final

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<sup>91</sup> See, for example, Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No.5*, and 'The Essence of Sibelius: Creation Myths and Rotational Cycles in *Luonnotar*', in Glenda Dawn Goss (ed.), *The Sibelius Companion* (Westport, 1996), 121-47; Darcy, 'Rotational Form', 49-74, and 'Bruckner's Sonata Deformations', in Timothy L. Jackson (ed.), *Bruckner Studies* (Cambridge, 1997), 256-77; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Invention of the Human: *Falstaff*, Op.68', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 28:3 (Spring 2005), 230-53; Daniel Grimley, 'Landscape and Distance: Vaughan Williams, Modernism and the Symphonic Pastoral', in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism, 1895-1960* (Farnham, 2010), 147-74.

<sup>92</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No.5*, 25.

structural goal, in the last rotation'.<sup>93</sup> I suggest below (with reference to the list of motives in Figure 2 and the structural overview in Figure 3) that Bantock employs a basic series of five musical ideas (a-e) that are presented in seven rotations.<sup>94</sup> These rotations incorporate the types of modifications that Hepokoski suggests. Some contain omissions, others are developed, primarily through repetition or the inclusion of additional motives; unusually for a rotational structure, later rotations also reorder musical events.<sup>95</sup> Rather than employing a rotational process for its own sake, Bantock's replaying suggests a hermeneutical significance: a constant reminder of the inevitability of Thalaba's quest – just as the 'progressive enlargement' of rotational materials (as part of a broader 'teleological genesis') in Sibelius's *Luonnotar*, as Hepokoski suggests, offers an effective 'musical image of the gestational process inferable in the text'.<sup>96</sup> However, this is not to ignore the underlying sonata form structure of Bantock's *Thalaba*, as the rotational cycles often coincide with the principal formal divisions of the sonata; the exposition and recapitulation represent one rotation each, for example, although there are two in the introduction, and three in the coda.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Darcy, 'Rotational Form', 52.

<sup>94</sup> The superscript dash in Figure 3 denotes some sort of transformation of the basic materials; upper case denotes a theme, lower case denotes a motif.

<sup>95</sup> The closest parallel in the literature referred to in footnote 91 above would be Elgar's *Falstaff*, where, as Harper-Scott notes, 'Elgar's Invention of the Human', 238-9, this more 'local' rotational model has rotations beginning variously with 'a varied restatement of primary thematic materials . . . either of the "Falstaff-" or of the "Eastcheap complex" – or of a combination of the two.' As Figure 3 shows, Bantock's rotations begin with either motif 'a' (the powers of evil) or theme 'C' (the hero Thalaba), apart from the final rotation led by Oneiza's theme 'B' – a fitting reordering given that this latter section focuses on the Thalaba-Oneiza reunion.

<sup>96</sup> Hepokoski, 'The Essence of Sibelius', 129-30.

<sup>97</sup> In examples such as the first movement of Mahler's Sixth Symphony, the four rotations represent the Exposition, Development, Recapitulation and Coda respectively; see Darcy, *ibid.*, 52-3.

### **Introduction (double rotation): Thalaba's quest established**

The opening of *Thalaba* establishes the quest materials in a referential statement, R1, that forms the basis of the rotations that follow. This begins with a brass chorale theme (a), *Mesto e lugubre*, whose tritone-based harmony (the *diabola in musica*) and more overt intervallic shape in bars 3-4 is suitably representative of the powers of evil.<sup>98</sup> Bantock's programme note highlights how the 'germs of the principal first and second subjects' (motifs c and b, respectively) appear as accompanying counterpoints to the chorale. Such juxtapositions suggest how the fates of both Thalaba and Oneiza are bound up with the evil forces that the hero has to overthrow, and even offer parallels with readings of the poem as an internal struggle:

Evil is portrayed on two levels in the epic: an embodied entity, as in the sinister characters of the Domdaniel [sic], and in more dangerous form, an aspect of the hero's personality. Thalaba is unable to recognize the evil of the Domdaniel characters until he discovers that evil also originates within himself. Only after his fall do we recognize that the Domdaniel is a representation of Thalaba's own mind and that the characters of the secret caverns are concrete manifestations of evil ideas originating within himself.<sup>99</sup>

The Thalaba germ (c) increases the momentum, and a dominant pedal, *Allegro molto*, heralds the descending scalic material (di/ii) and repetitions of the 'destiny' motif (e), highlighting

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<sup>98</sup> One suspects the influence of Bantock's teacher Frederick Corder here, as the particular progression represents a minor key version of the opening of the slow movement of Dvořák's Symphony No.9, 'From the New World'. Dvořák was a composer much admired by Corder and was often included in his composition teaching; see Michael Allis, 'Bax's Elgar: Musical Quotation, Allusion and Compositional Identity in the First String Quartet in G', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 136:2 (2011), 338-45.

<sup>99</sup> Meachen, 596.

the angel of death's admonishment, "'remember Destiny / Hath marked thee from mankind!'" Although the pacing of this material invites expectations of an exposition to immediately follow, instead, in the first of several structural deflections in this tone poem, Bantock undermines the music's preparatory function, combining a reduction in pace and dynamic to usher in a new theme in the tonic in bar 25. This theme (f), dominated by sighing figures and marked *Molto Più Lento*, represents Thalaba's mother Zeinab, who 'wanders o'er the desert sands / A wretched widow now';<sup>100</sup> Bantock identified her as one of the important spiritual influences on Thalaba, typifying 'faith, the talisman which will help him [Thalaba] to conquer in the coming strife',<sup>101</sup> but her status as a slower musical 'interruption' to the a-e rotation materials marks her out as a character external to the fatalistic thrust of Thalaba's quest narrative. Continuing the thematic connections in this introduction, her music incorporates a gentle allusion to the 'fate' motif (e) on the cor anglais, suggestive not of the single-minded revenge of the quest, but of her own unswaying belief in God's purpose:

She raised her swimming eyes to Heaven,  
                                 'Allah, thy will be done!  
 Beneath the dispensation of thy wrath  
                                 I groan, but murmur not.  
 A day will come, when all things that are dark  
 Will be made clear, . . . then shall I know, O Lord!  
 Why in thy mercy thou hast stricken me;  
 Then see and understand what now  
                                 My heart believes and feels.'<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> I: 25-6.

<sup>101</sup> *Thalaba* programme note, premiere.

<sup>102</sup> I: 59-67.

Her divagatory theme having run its course, Bantock re-establishes the sense of inevitability of the *Thalaba* narrative by replaying the earlier materials in a second, complementary rotation, R2. Although some elements are transposed [(a)] and others developed through repetition [(c)], they appear in the same order as the opening. Bantock's introduction is of course not the only example from the literature to incorporate fluctuations of tempi which play with the listener's expectations as to where a sonata exposition seems likely to begin – models with which he was familiar include Liszt's *Tasso*, or in a B minor context, Tchaikovsky's 'fantasy overture' *Romeo and Juliet*<sup>103</sup> – but his template of inevitable momentum occasionally derailed via an 'external' deflection provides a model for Southey's paratext as a whole.

### **Expository space ('character' rotation III): characters established**

After a dramatic pause we enter the expository space. The third rotation is a more expansive version of the previous two; it both reorders the quest materials and transforms motives c and b into their full thematic 'character' status (denoted in Figure 3 as upper case C and B) to

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<sup>103</sup> See Steven Vande Moortele, 'Beyond Sonata Deformation: Liszt's Symphonic Poem *Tasso* and the Concept of Two-Dimensional Sonata Form', *Current Musicology* 86 (Fall 2008), 51-2, and bars 78-100 of the introduction to Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* overture. As Watt's Appendix, "'A gigantic and popular place of entertainment'", 145-64, shows, Bantock conducted the *Romeo and Juliet* overture four times between August 1898 and July 1900, and conducted *Tasso* in August 1900. One wonders how familiar Bantock was with other deformatory B minor models, such as Liszt's B minor Sonata; more significant, perhaps, is that Bantock conducted Liszt's *Hamlet* at New Brighton on 4 September 1898 – not only another example of a deformational sonata structure in B minor, but one that, like *Thalaba*, retains the tonic minor at its close; see Steven Vande Moortele, 'Form, Program, and Deformation in Liszt's *Hamlet*', *Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie* 11:2 (2006), 71-82.

create the primary and secondary material of a sonata exposition – a direct reflection of the way in which Southey shifts his focus to these main characters at the beginning of book three, initially abandoning the narrator’s voice to adopt a mimetic approach.<sup>104</sup> Thalaba’s B minor theme (C) is characterised by obsessive repetitions and asymmetrical punctuations presented at a breathless *Allegro con fuoco* pace, confirming that, as Tucker suggests above, ‘he is his quest’. Reiterated references to motives (d) and (e) underscoring the fateful narrative are reinforced by percussive first-beat accents, and although a more legato version of (e) in bars 144-51 suggests echoes of Zeinab’s faith, the momentum is only dissipated by the repeated stammering of a four-note descending chromatic figure which gradually fades and slows to prepare for the secondary material, Oneiza’s theme (B). As in the introduction, therefore, the quest’s momentum is undermined by the representation of a female figure, and a reduction in pace is again associated with the hero being deflected from his purpose.<sup>105</sup> Although external to Thalaba’s quest, Oneiza is affected significantly by it – hence her continuing presence in the rotational events that follow. Oneiza’s music, based (like Zeinab’s) on sighing figures, is presented in her distinctive tonal centre of E minor. However, after the ‘destiny’ motif (e)

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<sup>104</sup> Southey, *Thalaba*, III: 1-168.

<sup>105</sup> Oneiza can be situated more widely in terms of other musical representations – particularly in opera – of female characters within an exotic setting who, as Locke notes, *Musical Exoticism*, 186, ‘are associated with nature’s irresistible attractions for the duty-bound male’, such as Verdi’s *Aida*, Saint-Saëns’ *Dalila*, Delibes’ *Lakmé* and Puccini’s *Cio-Cio-San*; see also Richard Taruskin’s discussion of how Vladimir is ‘emasculated’ by Konchakovna in Borodin’s *Prince Igor* through her musical evocation of *nega* (‘sweet bliss’ or ‘gratified desire’) via ‘tied or syncopated melodic undulations, and the reversible chromatic pass between the fifth and sixth degrees of the scale’ in “‘Entoiling the Falconet’: Russian Musical Orientalism in Context”, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 4:3 (November 1992), 253-80 (particularly 273-9). However, unlike the majority of these narrative models, the hero of *Thalaba* is himself part of this exoticism, rather than a Western outsider (Gérald in *Lakmé*, Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*) or representative of political authority (Radamès in *Aida*) tempted by it.

impinges once more, sequential ascending triplets lead to a more impassioned continuation of her theme in Thalaba's tonal centre of B minor – reminding the listener that her fate is ultimately bound up with that of the hero. Again the 'destiny' motif (e) interrupts, *con fuoco*, and after repetitions of (d) and (e) that echo the end of the introduction's referential statement, the 'powers of evil' theme 'a' returns (with a re-orchestrated Oneiza germ underneath); its new position at the end of this third rotation allows R3 to focus primarily upon the principal characters, but not to the detriment of the inevitability of the narrative.

### **Developmental space (Episode I): The temptation of Thalaba**

The new key of E major having been prepared, Bantock begins his developmental space with episodic material representative of 'the fatal languor which creeps over the will of Thalaba'<sup>106</sup> as he is temporarily distracted by an earthly Paradise. Southey reserves some of his richest descriptions for this section at the beginning of book six, noting how after entering this world of delight by blowing a horn 'of ivory tip and brazen mouth' to produce 'a sweet and thrilling melody', Thalaba 'passively received / The mingled joy which flowed on every sense', whether the 'rich pavilions' that 'Gleamed from their waving curtains sunny gold', the odours of the 'voluptuous vale', or the 'distance-mellowed song / From bowers of merriment'.<sup>107</sup> Bantock suggests this passivity via *pianissimo* neighbour-note repetitions supported by a rocking tonic-dominant bass in a *Poco Lento* tempo (see 'g' in Figure 2); gentle solo flute scalic roulades perhaps refer to Southey's 'single nightingale . . . Singing a love-song to his brooding mate'.<sup>108</sup> Further repetitive material – this time characterised by

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<sup>106</sup> *Thalaba* programme note, premiere.

<sup>107</sup> VI: 199-200, 202, 234-5, 238-9, 273, 260-1.

<sup>108</sup> VI: 264, 267.

harp arpeggiations punctuated by the triangle (motif h) – is suggestive of balletic steps, likely to be representative of the dancing girls as part of the isle’s delights:

Wearied at length with hunger and with heat  
 He enters in a banquet room,  
 Where round a fountain brink,  
 On silken carpets sate the festive train.  
 Instant thro’ all his frame  
 Delightful coolness spread . . .  
 Anon a troop of females formed the dance  
 Their ankles bound with bracelet-bells  
 That made the modulating harmony.  
 Transparent garments to the greedy eye  
 Gave all their harlot limbs,  
 That writhed, in each immodest gesture skilled.<sup>109</sup>

Thalaba is saved from these temptations only by the ‘talisman / Whose blessed Alchemy / To virtuous thoughts refined / The loose suggestions of the scene impure’;<sup>110</sup> in Bantock’s score, repetitions of Thalaba’s motif (c) – first as a gentle response to the harp arpeggiations, then in a more insistent and developed version in the strings – suggest the manner in which the hero gradually comes to his senses; the ‘destiny’ motif in turn leads to the recapitulatory space, as the brief hiatus of the island paradise defers once more to the dominance of the quest materials.

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<sup>109</sup> VI: 300-5, 352-7.

<sup>110</sup> VI: 361-4.



### **Expanded Recapitulatory space: tragedy, deflections and quest resolved**

The point in the *Thalaba* narrative at which Bantock places his recapitulation is an interesting one.<sup>111</sup> So far, the quest has been established, characters have been introduced, and Thalaba has been deflected from his destiny by the island paradise; however, the quest's resumption, the wedding scene, the death of Oneiza, Thalaba's subsequent grief and apparent withdrawal from his destiny, his renewed vigour, his capture by the evil forces, and the final denouement all have to be somehow catered for in the remainder of Bantock's structure, which explains the complexity of this final section and the end-focused nature of the orchestral poem as a whole. The first 'tragic' rotation (R4) in the recapitulation is a modified version of rotation 3 – omitting motive (a), focusing more upon the two central characters, and adding new material to represent Azrael, the angel of death. Thalaba's theme C (emotionally heightened via octave transposition and use of imitation) is followed, as before, by repetitions of motives (d) and (e), but a dramatic series of sequential diminished sevenths (anticipating the harmonic associations of the angel of death) increases the tension before the combination of 'destiny' and Thalaba motives; the latter reminds us that the hero is bound by his quest (and the obvious implications of this for his forthcoming nuptials), and the nature of the transition with its brooding chromatics and even suggestions of distant storms adds to the sense of foreboding. To represent the tragic and inevitable death of Oneiza,<sup>112</sup> her theme is effectively bisected. Her first *meno mosso* incarnation in bar 432 (proclaimed dramatically on the trumpet) retains her exposition tonality of E minor, and although the move to E major at the

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<sup>111</sup> Newman's Liverpool programme note offers an alternative structural interpretation at this point: 'All the essential thematic material of the poem has now been heard, and the composer enters upon his development.' However, this does not take into account the clear sense of return at bar 312.

<sup>112</sup> Bantock was aware of the necessity of Oneiza's death so that 'earthly love may not distract him [Thalaba] from his allotted task'; see Newman's Liverpool programme note.

*Poco più Andante* seems to offer some comfort, redolent of the couple's 'brief early happiness and rhapsody of love', this is only a temporary tonal redemption; ominously E major has been associated with only brief moments of bliss – such as Thalaba's temptations in the first episode. The decisive moment comes with the arrival of Azrael, where a transformation (j) of the destiny motif is further developed as Azrael's forceful brass music (k). Southey's brief reference to Oneiza's death is stark: 'Who comes from the bridal chamber? / It is Azrael, the Angel of Death'.<sup>113</sup> However, as another example of Bantock's more expansive treatment of Oneiza, *Appassionato con dolore* scalic descents related to (d) herald Oneiza's stuttering oboe triplets in G minor in bars 508-15, confirming her demise.

Relief is needed from the momentum of these events, and Bantock inserts a second episode at this point, *Molto Lento* – yet another slow-paced deflection. Described in the premiere's programme notes as 'Thalaba now wanders amid the tombs in darkness and desolation', this section offers 29 bars of a pedal G underpinning contrary motion chromatic scales (idea I in Figure 2) and writing in thirds (all as plodding crotchets within a 4/4 metre), ensuring that there is no sense of progression, matching the aimless wandering of the 'man distracted'. Only when the pedal G is deflected a semitone lower at the 2/4 in bar 545 is the extended Coda able to resume the momentum of the quest.

The first part of the Coda, a relatively brief and incomplete rotation 5 ('quest resumed') begins tentatively, as sixteen bars of a transformed Thalaba theme gradually increase in dynamic, leading to a reminder of the destiny motif. In the poem, Thalaba vanquishes the vampiric Oneiza before her true spiritual form appears to him, encouraging him to continue the quest; in Bantock's score, this suggestion of the quest's resumption incorporates a reference to the 'true' Oneiza in her original E minor tonality – the ensuing counterpoint in sixths probably reflecting their brief moment of joy together: 'They stood

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<sup>113</sup> VII: 406-7.

with earnest eyes / And arms out-reaching'.<sup>114</sup> However, again the music is interrupted by a third episode, *Poco Allegro*, representing the spinning scene where Thalaba is tricked by Maimuna. Here the roudades of the *Spinnerlied* (developing a genre explored by Schubert, Mendelssohn and Wagner)<sup>115</sup> are based on the contours of the first episode, now simply performed in at a quicker tempo – confirming yet another attempt by the Dom Daniel to deflect Thalaba from his quest; although presented as brass staccato chords at first, a version for strings, *pp misterioso* is suggestive of the magical properties of the thread.

The Dom Daniel seem to be in the ascendant, hence the extended version of (a) that begins the first of two complementary final rotations – the first dominated by (a), (d) and (e), and the second by (B)/(b) and (c). Although the listener initially hears this material as a fluid extension of Episode 3 (any overt sectionalisation is blurred by the *L'istesso tempo* marking), as Figure 3 suggests it soon becomes clear that these complementary rotations (divided by Zeinab's theme) actually represent a modified version of the introduction's structure. The fourfold repetition of the powers of evil material sees the Dom Daniel grow in stature: an example of how the rotational material can be expanded to reflect the narrative. However, the interruption by (e) and (d) confirms that the end of R1 from the Introduction is being replayed – even more so when Zeinab's theme returns for only the second time in the work to bisect the complementary rotations, reflecting her angelic presence towards the end of the poem:

But lo! Hodeirah's Spirit comes to see

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<sup>114</sup> VIII: 167-8. There are parallels here with Bantock's use of counterpoint to indicate the speaker's introduction of his characters in *Fifine at the Fair*; see Allis, 'Bantock and Browning', 174, 180.

<sup>115</sup> Although Bantock's 6-note spinning motive (E F# E D# C# D#) is not dissimilar to contours explored in Schubert's 'Gretchen am Spinnrade' D.118, or Mendelssohn's *Lied ohne Worte* Op.67/4, the auxiliary note repetition (E F# E F# E) might suggest a veiled reference to Wagner's spinning chorus from *Der fliegende Holländer*.

His vengeance, and beside him, a pure form  
 Of roseate light, the Angel mother hangs.  
 ‘My Child, my dear, my glorious, blessed Child,  
 My promise is performed . . . fulfil thy work!’<sup>116</sup>

To understand the final ‘death’ rotation, Southey’s final stanza is pertinent:

Thalaba knew that his death-hour was come,  
 And on he leapt, and springing up,  
 Into the Idol’s heart  
 Hilt-deep he drove the Sword.  
 The Ocean-Vault fell in, and all were crushed.  
 In the same moment at the gate  
 Of Paradise, Oneiza’s Hour-form  
 Welcomed her Husband to eternal bliss.<sup>117</sup>

Bantock had the opportunity here to incorporate a familiar *per aspera ad astra* narrative structure; it would have been perfectly possible to represent the defeat of Evil, and to follow this with a transformation of the Oneiza theme (B) in the relative or tonic major as the final structural goal, representing the lovers’ reunion in Heaven. Instead, Bantock inverts this sequence of events. He begins with a D major transformation of the Oneiza theme, identified by Bantock as representing the line ‘Thalaba knew that his death-hour was come’ (suggesting the hero looking forward to his reunion with Oneiza after death). But it is the tonic minor that reasserts itself through stringendo and fortissimo syncopations (again based on Oneiza’s

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<sup>116</sup> XII: 491-5.

<sup>117</sup> XII: 496-503.

contours), and descending scales suggestive of the thrust of Thalaba's sword; the work then ends with a trombone choir suggestive of the downfall of the powers of evil, repetitions of the Thalaba germ (c), a brief reference to Oneiza, and final percussive Thalaba reiterations, ensuring that the hero and his quest (and indeed his key) remain at the centre of the narrative in the final bars.

Bantock's *Thalaba the Destroyer* therefore reveals the composer as a strong reader of Southey's poem. The layers of otherness in Southey's text highlighted by literary scholars find a parallel in Bantock's musical style, where Oneiza's overt far-eastern 'otherness' contrasts with the 'near-eastern' Tchaikovskian tropes that represent the quest narrative. This both identifies Bantock as a more significant figure in the reception of music from Russia in the late nineteenth century, and encourages us to consider Bantock's influence on later British musical responses to oriental topics – whether Holst's opera *Sita* (1900-06) or Delius's incidental music to James Elroy Flecker's *Hassan* (1923). In terms of musical design, Bantock's thoughtful manipulation of an end-focused deformational sonata structure highlights the inevitability of Thalaba's quest, as the modified replaying of driving rotational materials associated with the hero's destiny are punctuated by static episodic deflections; the deliberate return to a modified version of the introduction at the end of the piece serves to underscore the inevitability of the narrative even further. Similarly, rather than redeeming the B minor tonality through a *per aspera ad astra* progression, Bantock provides only a brief reference to D major to suggest Thalaba's reconciliation with Oneiza, before returning to the key of B minor key at the end of the work to underline the quest's inevitable conclusion.

Bantock's distinctive mapping of musical structure and poetic paratext suggests that his approach to programme music might be situated in terms of Richard Strauss's familiar position – that musical structures should be understood in terms of the poetic models that lie behind them:

I have found myself in a gradually ever increasing contradiction between the musical-poetic content that I want to convey a[nd] the ternary sonata form that has come down to us from the classical composers . . . If you want to create a work of art that is unified in mood and consistent in its structure . . . [then] this is only possible through the inspiration by a poetical idea, whether or not it be introduced as a programme. I consider it a legitimate artistic method to create a correspondingly new form for every new subject.<sup>118</sup>

Indeed, Bantock's other orchestral works of this period confirm this experimental approach. His 'orchestral drama' *Fifine at the Fair* (1902, revised 1911, premiered 1912), a musical refiguring of Robert Browning's dramatic monologue, incorporates three expository key centres to represent the Pornic Fair and Don Juan's choice between his wife and mistress, and multiple recapitulatory events to represent the vacillations of the Don's decision-making;<sup>119</sup> *The Witch of Atlas* (1902) is dominated by thematic transformations of the witch's music, suitably representative of the way in which Shelley uses visual perspective to manipulate his readers' expectations in the poem; and the close of *Dante and Beatrice* (1901, rev. 1910) adopts the secondary tonal centre of D flat major – rather than the primary key (C minor) or its tonic major – suggestive of Dante's reunion with his beloved after death. These examples not only highlight Bantock's considerable ability to refigure literary texts orchestrally in meaningful ways; they also suggest that Bantock's compositional status should be reassessed in relation to the more familiar composers associated with the 'first, active phase' of musical modernism<sup>120</sup> – a significant first step on the road to his rehabilitation.

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<sup>118</sup> Willi Schuh and Franz Trenner (eds.), trans. Anthony Gishford, *Hans von Bülow and Richard Strauss: Correspondence* (Westport, 1979), 82-3.

<sup>119</sup> See Allis, 'Bantock and Browning: Reformulated Dramatic Monologue in *Fifine at the Fair*', 156-88.

<sup>120</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No.5*, 7.