Sullivan, Scott and *Ivanhoe*: Constructing Historical Time and National Identity in Victorian Opera

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Arthur Sullivan's Walter Scott-based opera Ivanhoe, *despite attaining great success at its 1891 premiere, has since quickly fallen from musicological grace. Substantive criticism of this work in the twentieth century has concentrated on the static, tableau-like dramaturgy of the opera, a lack of dramatic coherence, and its undeniably conservative musical language. Taking its bearings from such criticisms this paper explores Sullivan's problematic* magnum opus *from the perspective of its relationship with time, understood from multiple levels – his opera's musical-dramaturgical, historical, and music-historical temporalities. Starting from Michael Beckerman's insightful analysis of what he terms the 'iconic mode' in Sullivan's music,* Ivanhoe *can be viewed as an attempt at creating a different type of dramaturgical paradigm that emphasizes stasis and stability located in the past – highly apt for a work seeking both to crystallize past history and to found a new tradition for future English opera. Moreover, investigating this work and the composer's stated aesthetic concerns more closely reveal a conscious desire to opt out of continental European narratives of musical progress and build a composite, pageant-like vision of English history, therefore inevitably partaking in a process of constructing national identity. These features are teased out in the context of Scott's impact on the Victorian mind and their affinities with other historicist tendencies in the arts such as the Pre-Raphaelite movement.*

Arthur Sullivan's Walter Scott-based opera *Ivanhoe*, despite attaining considerable success at its 1891 premiere, has since quickly fallen from musicological grace. Although initially achieving a remarkable run of 155 consecutive performances, the ultimate failure of the business venture with which it was closely connected (Richard D'Oyly Carte's Royal English Opera House), allied with Sullivan's declining reputation as a composer of serious music, the widespread twentieth-century reaction against Victorian culture and the relative intransigence of resuscitating an already comatose opera, condemned it by association in the eyes of posterity, and it all too easily followed the fate of most other works of nineteenth-century British music.

Substantive criticism of this work in the twentieth century has concentrated on the static, tableau-like dramaturgy of the opera, a lack of dramatic coherence, and its undeniably conservative musical language. As the critic in *The Times* wrote during Beecham's 1910 Royal Opera revival, dramatically 'the whole work seems

curiously loose-limbed and wanting in force and concentration … hampered by [the] desire to get in the whole of the story, or at any rate as much of it as could be made at all picturesque,' while musically it was 'merely old fashioned … a sin for which there is no forgiveness.'[1] *The Standard* voiced similar sentiments: 'There is practically no sense of continuity between the various scenes, and little sense of focus and climax. … Of real dramatic intuition there is little or nothing in the score.' The libretto offers 'little more than a series of disconnected tableaux.'[2] Thomas Dunhill, meanwhile, a sympathetic defender of the composer, described the opera in 1929 as 'a mere panorama of events without constructive unity.'[3] Winton Dean, reviewing a 1973 amateur revival, criticized harshly the episodic libretto and the lack 'of dramatic pace in a continuous score' measured against 'the tension of Verdi or the symphonic architecture of Wagner.' 'This opera was a good sixty years out of date; so presumably was English taste' concludes Dean.[4] Even Arthur Jacobs, Sullivan's foremost biographer, locates a weakness in the opera's structure, from low-level melodic syntax that 'rarely takes wing on its own' (does Wagner?), through the frequent medium-level set-piece construction to the 'nine scenes, none musically linked to the rest', judged against either the contemporary backdrop of Wagnerian 'symphonic flow' or Mascagni's dramatic compression.[5]

Taking its bearings from such criticisms this article explores Sullivan's problematic *magnum opus* from the perspective of its relationship with time, understood from multiple levels – the opera's musical-dramaturgical, historical, and music-historical temporalities. In other words, it seeks to re-evaluate *Ivanhoe*'s dramaturgy, narrative and musical language by reconsidering the models of temporality such criticisms are based upon. Starting from Michael Beckerman's insightful analysis of what he terms the 'iconic mode' in Sullivan's music, *Ivanhoe* can be viewed as an attempt at creating a different type of dramaturgical paradigm that emphasizes enduring identity located in the past – highly apt for a work seeking both to crystallize past history and found a new tradition for future English opera. Investigating this work and the composer's stated aesthetic concerns more closely reveal a conscious desire to opt out of the modern temporal sense found in contemporaneous continental European narratives of musical progress and build a composite, pageant-like vision of English history, therefore inevitably partaking in a process of constructing national identity.

Musical-dramaturgical temporality

Nicholas Temperley, in a considered and well-argued reply to Winton Dean's criticism of Sullivan's opera, highlighted certain unspoken assumptions concerning

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[1]   *The Times*, 9 March 1910.
[2]   *The Standard*, 9 March 1910.
[3]   T. F. Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1929): 194.
[4]   Winton Dean, review of Beaufort Opera's revival of *Ivanhoe*, *The Musical Times*, 114 (1973): 722. Yet harsher, and abstaining even from trying to support his assertions, is Ernest Walker: 'a purely elementary work all through … as a rule mere commonplace … with not a trace of workmanship worth mentioning, and the deadly dullness of nearly all the opera passes belief.' Walker, *A History of Music in England*, 1907; third edition, revised and enlarged J.A. Westrup (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952): 325.
[5]   Arthur Jacobs, 'Arthur Sullivan', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 volumes (London: Macmillan, 2001): 24: 697.

an opera's underlying musical-dramatic temporal strategy that critics in the twentieth century have been accustomed to demand. Underlying the criticism of *Ivanhoe*, Temperley held, 'is a more general assumption that every successful opera must show the kind of dramatic tension and character development that is found in Mozart or Verdi.' In fact, Temperley continues, 'certain schools of opera have flourished for long periods with only the most perfunctory dramatic framework.' 'One does not find much of it [dramatic tension] in *Orfeo* (Monteverdi) or Gluck, in Handel, or in Wagner. Yet critics persist in condemning lesser works on the bogus ground that they are not dramatic in this sense'. Instead, Victorian opera should be criticized 'on its own terms.'[6]

Just what Victorian opera's 'own terms' are obviously requires some further explanation. It seems clear that for Sullivan and many of his British contemporaries the taut unfolding of dramatic narrative was not always a priority, the composer being happy to emphasize the picturesque, scenic qualities of a story through a succession of accompanying musical numbers.[7] As we shall see, this tendency is in fact characteristic of English musical theatre since the seventeenth century. Through-sung operas are something of a rarity in English operatic history before the late nineteenth century (Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1689), Arne's *Artaxerxes* (1760) and Barnett's *The Mountain Sylph* (1834) are among a handful of significant exceptions), and despite the upsurge of operatic production in the last quarter of the century, these latter works still retain discrete set-piece construction, inserted dances, ballads and songs, in place of continuous designs in the manner of the later Wagner or Verdi.[8] From this perspective, John Caldwell offers a historically based defence of Sullivan's design of 'continuous but detached scenes' in light of contemporary practice, since 'neither this variety nor the lack of continuity between scenes was abnormal at the time.'[9] Early reviews of *Ivanhoe*'s premiere bear this out, speaking of the picturesque nature of Sullivan's conception, but not dismissing it thereby.[10] This point suggests

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[6] Nicholas Temperley, reply to Winton Dean's review, *The Musical Times*, 114 (1973): 896.

[7] John Caldwell for instance claims that 'the idioms natural to English composers were not inherently musico-dramatic' (*The Oxford History of English Music*, 2 volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 2: 251). In part this is surely to do with the strength of the choral oratorio/cantata tradition in Victorian Britain, the relative scarcity of provision for opera in English and an underlying cultural mistrust of the operatic stage.

[8] Through-sung British operas in the decades preceding *Ivanhoe* include Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* (1875); Cowen's *Pauline* (1876) and *Thorgrim* (1890); Stanford's *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan* (1877), *Savonarola* (1884) and *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1884); Goring Thomas's *Esmeralda* (1883) and *Nadeshda* (1885); Mackenzie's *Colomba* (1883) and *The Troubadour* (1886); and Corder's *Nordisa* (1887). See further Nigel Burton's overview in *The Athelone History of Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800–1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley (London: Athlone, 1981): 342–50.

[9] Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music*, 2: 252.

[10] J.A. Fuller Maitland's review in *The Times* (2 February 1891) locates these general features in Scott's novel, but sees them, contrariwise, as pre-eminently *suited* to operatic setting: 'Scott's immortal romance has always had special attractions for opera composers, and the reason is very easily found; the picturesque costumes, the atmosphere of chivalry and of free forest life and certain eminent dramatic situations more than make up for the obvious want of unity and central interest in the story itself.' These 'eminent dramatic situations' are captured in the Act 2 Scene 3 duet between Rebecca and the Templar, praised by many critics (cf. *The Musical Times*, 32 (1891): 150), although with this notable

immediately that Temperley's suggestion of using a Victorian aesthetic to judge Sullivan's work may provide a more enlightening perspective on the opera – historically at least, if not also aesthetically.

The idea that dramatic tension and character development are necessary conditions for an operatic work – as indeed that organic development and goal-directed motion are a critical yardstick for music – is anyway rather questionable. This presupposition is premised upon an underlying conception of time, and human existence in time, as essentially linear, teleological, and progressive, and the subsequent inference that art should reflect this nature accurately. These premises may seem natural and self-evident to us since they are a belief about the world around us and how we live in and are conditioned by time that is found particularly strongly in the last four centuries of Western thought, but, as Jonathan Kramer has pointed out, such a conception is in fact neither universal nor (necessarily) absolute.[11] It is rather a belief underpinned by the rise of modernity, scientific thinking and the Enlightenment in Western Europe. Western classical music, especially the Austro-German symphonic tradition, has traditionally emphasized this progressive, teleological conception of time, but other forms of temporality can be found in music, argues Kramer, such as that from non-Western cultures and in experimental music from the later twentieth century. More recently scholars have explored alternative musical and operatic temporalities in a wide range of music from the Renaissance, through the Romantic era to the present day.[12]

Michael Beckerman, speaking of Sullivan's light opera *Haddon Hall* from the following year, has identified a characteristic use of time and musical-dramatic temporality in Sullivan's operatic music that he designates 'iconic', which differs from conventionally understood dramatic writing:

> We often use the term 'drama' as if it were synonymous with conflict. Thus what we may identify as the dialectic mode of dramatic presentation is so commonplace that we might mistakenly assume it to be the central ingredient of all types of theatrical performance … In this dialectic mode, the future is uncertain: the audience thus becomes conscious of movement towards a goal, of passage through time.
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>   Yet not all types of presentation utilize the dialectic. … Parades, pageants, and all manner of pastorals offer the spectator scenes free from conflict, an image of perfected time. These may be considered examples of the iconic mode … Working in iconic time, a dramatist 'tends to create an image of an idea rather than an image of time passing'. The iconic mode in its purest form is not merely characterized by stasis

exception reviewers would normally admit that the lyrical writing took precedence over the dramatic (see *The Athenaeum*, 14 February 1891, 226). Interestingly, Fuller Maitland perceives a tension between conflicting aesthetics of operatic construction (the older set-piece versus the continuous modern style) in evaluating the work, suggesting that if the latter viewpoint became hegemonic (as it did), *Ivanhoe* would not be positively judged. In this context, it is also worth noting that the age of widespread operatic setting of Scott – including versions of *Ivanhoe* by Marschner and Nicolai – occurred much earlier in the nineteenth century, before the dramaturgical innovations of Wagner and Verdi rendered a more static operatic temporality outmoded for contemporary critics.

[11]   Jonathan D. Kramer, 'New Temporalities in Music', *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1981): 539–56.

[12]   A prominent recent example is Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).

but also embraces a 'steady state of being, an undifferentiated timelessness that demonstrates an abiding truth.'[13]

Ivanhoe does not hide the visual, spatial, iconic properties of its design. Symmetrically formed from three acts each consisting of three scenes, the resulting nine musical tableaux present scenes drawn from Scott's novel that seem chosen as much for their scenic, picturesque qualities as their dramatic ones (Figure 1).[14] As commentators and critics readily observed, the opera is marked by a plethora of characters, the relationships between them not always being well defined in the libretto (important motivating events and connecting incidents are sometimes entirely cut in Sturgis's adaptation), the erstwhile protagonist Ivanhoe is an often passive hero, one of a crowd of varied types with little development in character from beginning to end, and there is no one point of dramatic climax (or classical *peripeteia*) but rather a succession of episodes that present more-or-less visually attractive pictorial scenes from an imagined history.[15]

In this sense, the term 'novelistic' often applied to Sullivan's opera is an accurate description, not only as the work presents a wide variety of characters and incidents but also by virtue of the fact that it presupposes prior acquaintance with Scott's novel (hardly unusual for opera-goers in late nineteenth-century Britain but increasingly infrequent in the twentieth century).[16] This quality is

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[13] Michael Beckerman, 'Arthur Sullivan, *Haddon Hall*, and the Iconic Mode', *Comparative Drama*, 22 (1988): 2–3 (this article is reproduced in revised form in the author's 'Standing still and moving forward: *The Mikado, Haddon Hall* and concepts of time in the Savoy operas', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 109–21). Beckerman is citing here the work of his father, the Shakespearean scholar Bernard Beckerman (later collated in *Theatrical Presentation: Performer, Audience and Act* (New York: Routledge, 1990): chapter 3 'Iconic Presentation'). Note 'that the two modes of presentation … are rarely present as theoretical absolutes, *but most often overlap and coalesce in the course of a play, musical, or an opera*' (3).

[14] The division into three acts follows broadly the outlines of Scott's division into three volumes. Here I have adopted numbering the chapters of the novel consecutively for simplicity of reference (Volume 1: chapters 1–14; Volume 2: chapters 15–30; Volume 3: chapters 31–44). Page numbers to Scott's novel follow the Penguin Classics reproduction of the text of the 1998 critical Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000).

[15] '*Ivanhoe* presents itself in nine tableaux with a panoply of characters and no single dramatic event' (Jonathan Strong, '*Ivanhoe* and Continental Opera', in *Sullivan's Ivanhoe*, ed. David Eden (Saffron Walden: Sir Arthur Sullivan Society, 2007): 66). 'Since *Ivanhoe* is essentially a pageant with music, truly dramatic events tend to be few and far between' (Chris Goddard, 'Sullivan's *Ivanhoe*: Its History and Music' (BMus dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 1977), <http://www.webrarian.co.uk/ivanhoe/index.html>).

[16] 'Generally, Sturgis relies on his audience's familiarity with the novel, and for this reason concentrates on making attractive stage pictures rather than telling the story, and this tends to give a static, tableau effect. It is this tableau effect which modern commentators have most difficulty in accepting; they therefore criticize Sullivan for making little or no attempt to unify the opera beyond the scope of a primitive *leitmotiv* – certainly a false and damaging premise.' Martin Yates, 'Contrast and Unity in the score of *Ivanhoe*', *Sullivan's Ivanhoe*, 52. Cf. the German review of the 1895 Berlin performance, complaining of the 'confusion and chaos of situations, incidents, stage events, of puzzling characters' ['ein solches wirres Durcheinander, ein solches Chaos von Situationen, Begebenheiten, Verwandlungen, von rätselhaften Persönlichkeiten'], *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 63/92 (1 January 1896): 6. The relation between novel and opera is outlined in

Act / Scene	*Dramatis personae*	Character	Chapter
Act 1			
Scene 1: The Hall of Rotherwood	Cedric, Isaac of York, De Bracy, The Templar, Rowena, Ivanhoe, Chorus	Indoor, public	3, 4, 5 [15]
Scene 2: An Ante-room in Rotherwood	Rowena, Ivanhoe; Isaac	Indoor, private: love scene	6
Scene 3: The Lists at Ashby	Tutti	Outdoor, public, dramatic	12, 16
Act 2			
Scene 1: The Forest, Copmanhurst	King Richard, Friar Tuck, Locksley, chorus	Outdoor, rustic: comic interlude	16, 17, 32
Scene 2: A Passageway in Torquilstone	Rowena, De Bracy, Cedric, Templar	Indoor, claustrophobic	23
Scene 3: A Turret-Chamber in Torquilstone	Ulrica, Rebecca, Templar	Indoor, private, claustrophobic	31, 24
Act 3			
Scene 1: A Room in Torquilstone	Ivanhoe, Rebecca, Ulrica	Indoor, private; narration of external events	28, 29, 31, 40
Scene 2: In the Forest	King Richard, Ivanhoe, Rowena, Cedric, Isaac, Chorus	Outdoor, rustic	32, 42
Scene 3: Preceptory of the Templars at Templestowe	Tutti	Public, formal	37, 43, 44

Fig. 1   Layout of Sullivan's *Ivanhoe*, with chapter source from Scott's novel

characteristic of a nineteenth-century (and particularly British) trend for creating musical pieces using episodes drawn from a known, larger literary work – Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* (1853), Parry's *Scenes from Prometheus Unbound* (1880), Sullivan's own *The Golden Legend* (1886), Elgar's *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* (1896) and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha* Trilogy (1900) are all examples of this tendency.[17] To this extent, too, twentieth-century criticism of the opera's disjointed narrative misses the well-established context for this type of dramaturgical design in the nineteenth century.

The relationship between the opera and its literary source can in fact be taken further; certain elements of Sturgis's/Sullivan's work, such as the approach to

Jerome Mitchell, *The Walter Scott Operas* (Tuscaloosa, AL: Alabama University Press, 1977): 189–200; see also Stan Meares, 'A Century of *Ivanhoe*', *Ivanhoe (Centenary Booklet)* (Coventry: Sir Arthur Sullivan Society, 1990): 11.

17   Also note in this context the number of prominent instances of incidental music for plays and use of melodrama in the nineteenth century – a genre which later became unfashionable. Examples include the Mendelssohn–Shakespeare *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Schumann–Byron *Manfred*, Bizet–Daudet *L'arlésienne*, and Grieg–Ibsen *Peer Gynt*. English music has a long heritage of accompanying established literary stage works, from Purcell's *The Fairy-Queen* and *The Tempest* through Sullivan's incidental music to five Shakespeare plays, Mackenzie's *Coriolanus* and the Oxbridge Greek dramas of Macfarren, Stanford, Parry and Vaughan Williams; a reason for this concentration may lie in the strength of (and corresponding emphasis on) the literary artistic tradition in Britain.

dramaturgy and narrative structuring, find a complement in Scott's novel – as do the attitude to language and history examined later. Scott's willingness to introduce poetry and ballads into his prose, for instance, is mirrored by the examples of diegetic song in Sturgis/Sullivan, most notably the songs provided in Act 2 Scene 1 – King Richard's 'I ask nor wealth' and Friar Tuck's well-known 'The wind blows cold'. These provide a break within the dynamic unfolding of plot, a digression that provides space for humour, the depiction of character and the broader picturesque atmosphere. An overriding symmetry of design is also shared by opera and novel. Alice Chandler observes that Scott's *Ivanhoe* is 'remarkably symmetrical in plot, with the symmetry underscoring the theme'; the novel progresses in broad outline 'from Rotherwood to the tournament, to the forest glade, to Torquilstone, and back to the forest glade, a tournament, and Rotherwood'. This symmetry is nevertheless progressive; the narrative meets its nadir at Torquilstone, with its 'confrontation between good and evil' and 'apocalyptic destruction by fire', after which crisis-point 'the plot retraces itself backwards towards harmony.' The resulting design is consequently 'not only symmetrical but triumphant', combining static, spatial qualities with some overriding degree of dynamism.[18]

Further spatialization of the narrative is suggested in the multi-stranded alternation of scenes, the picturesque switching from one world to another, depicting at different points in the narration events that are sometimes occurring simultaneously. One of the best examples of this tension between dynamism and iconic spatialization in Scott is found in the solitary trumpet call that three times interrupts chapters set in the bowels of Torquilstone (chapters 22, 23, 24), as Isaac, Rowena, and Rebecca are undergoing their respective ordeals at the hands of their Norman captors. A single, unique moment is experienced three separate times, from three different perspectives. Another primary characteristic of both story and opera is the mosaic-like alternation of outdoor and indoor scenes, public and more intimate, the dramatic, lyrical and humorous, the foreboding presence of Norman Torquilstone and the carefree life of the Saxon forest.[19] Again, this is a technique that characterizes Scott's narrative technique, deriving arguably from the structure of medieval Romance.[20]

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[18] Alice Chandler, 'Chivalry and Romance: Scott's Medieval Novels', *Studies in Romanticism*, 14 (1975): 198–9. The final Rotherwood scene is omitted in the opera, its events compressed into the end of the victory at Templestowe in Act 3 Scene 3.

[19] The original plan for the opera, in which Act 2's forest scene was to have been placed between the two Torquilstone scenes, emphasizes this symmetry perfectly. This would have underscored the parallel structures of all three acts (a more relaxing, lyrical or humorous interlude occurring between two scenes of higher tension), mirroring especially the layout of Act 3. The design was changed before the premiere, presumably on account of the time taken to change sets, though the result also moved the opera closer to the actual order of Scott's chapters and created a more linear narrative. See further Ulrike Robrahn, '*Ivanhoe* als lyrische Oper (Sullivan) und historischer Roman (Scott) unter Berücksichtigung von werkimmanenter Dramaturgie, öffentlicher Rezeption und Institutions-geschichte' (Diplomarbeit, Magdeburg University, 2001): 3.1.2, <http://www.sullivan-forschung.de/html/f1-analysen-ivenhoe.html>.

[20] See Jerome Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1987): 234–41, and Fiona Robertson, 'Romance and the Romantic Novel: Sir Walter Scott', in Corinne Saunders, ed., *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004): 298–9. The classic examination of Romance structure is given by

At a more specifically musical level, the construction of the opera blends the dramatic-dynamic with static, picturesque elements. Though *Ivanhoe* undeniably demonstrates the effects of the nineteenth century's persistent demand for through-composed opera, the continuous spans of music Sullivan writes within scenes, averaging about twenty minutes, frequently break down into underlying set pieces embedded into the larger musical fabric. This tendency is seen most clearly in the two diegetic songs mentioned in Act 2 as well as Cedric's first scene 'Raise the cup', though underlying modified strophic structure is also evident in such pieces as Rowena's 'O Moon, art thou clad' and Rebecca's 'Lord of our chosen race'. Though some use is made of the more fluid, loosely structured phrase syntax typifying later Wagner (Scene 1 is a good case in point), the use of such devices as *Leitmotiv* is normally restricted to the recurrence of more traditional 'reminiscence' themes which, when developed, are lightly modified in ways that the audience can usually clearly perceive. In short, the medium-scale structure of the opera is relatively conservative for 1891 (as attested to by almost all commentators) and formally clearly defined, even sectional. This compromise between formal approaches was noted at the time of the premiere; Fuller Maitland (generally critical of Sullivan) was not convinced by the result, although other critics, and the large attending public, were. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* reported, 'In our opinion the composer of *Ivanhoe* has struck a most happy medium between the set forms of the past and the rhapsodical diffuseness of extreme Wagnerianism; and, if we mistake not, his medium will be a genuinely popular one in the ears of all'.[21]

The criticism of hiatus within scenes does have some grounds: Act 1 Scene 3 (the tournament), for instance, despite containing a rousing double chorus, is musically rather piecemeal, though (viewed from the perspective of opera being fundamentally a theatrical, mimetic genre) relies correspondingly on the spectacle visible on stage; the final scene is open to similar criticism. Nevertheless there are several examples of through-composition and development within scenes that link the separate parts smoothly. Scene 1 is fluidly constructed in its negotiation between successive sections, as is Act 2 Scenes 1 and 3. Act 1 Scene 2, in particular, is notable for its sensitive and compositionally sophisticated process of musical growth, mirroring perfectly the analogous development of the as yet unspoken love between the protagonists. A thematic idea consisting of a simple falling scale is introduced at Ivanhoe's entry, an embryo of what will blossom later at the climax of the scene. It is subsequently heard at Rowena's concerned 'God keep him safe', developed into a more characteristic hemiolic version at Ivanhoe's

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Northrop Frye in *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); also see Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 51–176. In Mitchell's reading, Scott's narrative designs typically divide into three parts: a slow start that leisurely unfolds the elements of the story; a middle which divides into multiple, parallel strands (of which *Ivanhoe* is a perfect example); and conclusion that brings the separate strands together again and ties them up, rather in the manner of an operatic finale. Sullivan's opera passes quickly through the first of these stages (Sturgis sensibly omitting the first two chapters, although *Ivanhoe* in this respect is hardly the most indolent of Scott's novels), while the latter two correspond to its design precisely.

[21]   *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 February 1891, 2; for Fuller Maitland's response see note 10. Sullivan himself, it seems, wished to write something more continuously dramatic than his earlier works, though it is clear that he did not succeed to the extent his critics wished (Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician* (Basingstoke: Scolar Press, 1992): 317, 328).

'Ah! then if he beyond the ocean foam', and then at the climax ('hope is for all the world') sung by the two in thirds over a romantically undulating cello line that reprises the melody heard at Rowena's 'If thou dost see him' (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1   Sullivan: *Ivanhoe*, Act 1 Scene 2 [D+4] (Sir Arthur Sullivan, *Ivanhoe*, full score edited from the autograph manuscript by Robin Gordon-Powell, 3 volumes (The Amber Ring, 2008))
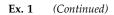
Ex. 1   *(Continued)*

Sullivan also utilizes a technique of appending dramatic material to the end of a scene after its apparent natural close in order to link the narrative to the ensuing scene, resulting in an open-ended design.[22] This type of linkage is also

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22   For instance in Act 1 Scene 1: De Bracy's plan to abduct Rowena; Act 1 Scene 2: Ivanhoe's warning to Isaac; Act 2 Scene 1: Locksley's urgent message of the abductions

Ex. 1   *(Continued)*

carried out by the Normans; Act 2 Scene 3: the trumpet call, announcing the storming of Torquilstone which occurs in the following scene (here a brief interjection before the end); Act 3 Scene 2: Isaac's news of Rebecca's trial for witchcraft.

Ex. 1   *(Continued)*

made musically in Act 1, where the E major of Scene 2 is approached through opening in its minor subdominant, A, the common notes C and E forming a harmonic link with the C major close of Scene 1. The result of these formal strategies is a string of scenes, musical-visual pictures, that are both enclosed and yet open out onto each other.

At the largest level, too, the dramaturgy of the opera follows three parallel waves of escalating tension to a climactic conflict and its resolution. Act 1 moves from the opening challenge pledged between the Templar and Ivanhoe, set against the implicit enmity between Saxon and Norman and Ivanhoe's supposed exile, to Ivanhoe's victory over the Norman knight at Ashby and consequent unmasking at the close. The second wave, the largest, spans Act 2 Scene 1 to Act 3 Scene 1, and moves from the purity of Saxon rural life through the darkness of Norman Torquilstone to the destruction of the castle, the rescuing of the Saxons and unmasking of the Black Knight as King Richard. The third (Act 3 Scenes 2 to 3) completes the narrative business left unfinished in the second, passing again from the tranquillity of the woodland glade to the rescue of Rebecca and rout of the Templar Order.

Nonetheless, this general design still tolerates digressions and interpolations. The woodland encounter between King Richard and Friar Tuck (Act 2 Scene 1), for instance, derided by later critics as 'dramatically irrelevant',[23] presents some of Sullivan's most attractive (and popular) music, and can easily be argued to be as necessary as any other scene if the opera is understood to be a scenic, picturesque traversal through an imagined historical England rather than merely the syllogistic unfolding of an ethical proposition translated into theatrical *personae*. The earlier nineteenth-century genre of *tableaux vivants*, so popular in the Victorian era, suggests itself here – or the magic lantern displays that to some extent superseded them later in the century.[24] The image depicted is visual and spatial rather than temporal and dynamic, yet still filled with life. Attending the opera is to experience a heroic adventure story, a visual feast, an entertaining re-enactment of history. Hermann Klein, an acquaintance of the composer, encapsulated this aural-visual-narrative panoply well in describing *Ivanhoe* as a work 'which rivets the attention of the *spectator* from the moment the curtain is raised; which is strong and sympathetic in action and picturesque in story; which is rich in melody and replete with musical interest and contrast'.[25]

The opera's dramaturgy, then, is a mixture of the iconic and dynamic, but with the balance closer to the former than dominant critical paradigms of the later-nineteenth and twentieth centuries would desire. The opera, like the novel upon which it is based, does have its drama, but this is not taut, strictly linear or unified, and it is intermixed with scenic, romantic, humorous and pageant-like elements.[26] The result conforms perfectly to Sullivan's stated operatic ideal: a work

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[23]   Winton Dean, review of *Ivanhoe*, 722.

[24]   The importance of the *tableaux* in Victorian society and its influence on the structure of Victorian literary narrative (especially in Dickens) has often been recognized (see for instance Donald H. Ericksen, ' ''Black House'' and Victorian Art and Illustration: Charles Dickens's Visual Narrative Style', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 13/1 (1983): 31–46; Rhoda Leven Flaxman, *Victorian Word-Painting and Narrative: Toward the Blending of Genres* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987); Grahame Smith, *Dickens and the Dream of Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003): 64–5). The specific relationship of the *tableau vivant* to music and its perceived landscape/pictorial quality, meanwhile, has been the focus of growing attention in recent musical scholarship; for a good introduction see Thomas S. Grey, '*Tableaux vivants*: Landscape, History Painting, and the Visual Imagination in Mendelssohn's Orchestral Music', *19th-Century Music*, 21 (1997–8): 38–76.

[25]   Hermann Klein, *Thirty Years of Musical Life in London, 1870–1900* (London: Heinemann, 1903): 169, my emphasis.

[26]   In this context one might further note that the Victorian novel is also frequently marked by these same qualities of picturesque digression and profusion of narrative

of 'human emotions and human passions' with a balance of 'dramatic, humorous and romantic aspects'.[27] Once we consider this dramaturgical-temporal structure in its own right as a significant constructive factor in the opera and not merely as a failed attempt at a more conventionally dynamic type of dramatic writing, we might obtain a more insightful and fruitful understanding of the work than that routinely arrived at in earlier critiques. Beckerman's analysis of an 'iconic mode' in Sullivan suggests that the static, visual and picturesque elements of the opera can be read as belonging to an alternative dramaturgical paradigm that emphasizes stability and identity found in an ideal past. This quality is obviously highly appropriate for a national work, presenting an idealized scene from English history, intended as the founding work of a new line of English opera.

National Qualities, Musical Style and Language

Sullivan wrote *Ivanhoe* for the new Royal English Opera House that Richard D'Oyly Carte had custom built in Cambridge Circus with the express purpose of founding a permanent repertory opera company on London supporting works by national composers.[28] As the realization of his long cherished ambition of writing a full-scale dramatic work, Sullivan conceived *Ivanhoe* as the fulfilment of his dream of the ideal opera, a work at once patriotic, national, and historical.

As Temperley argues, Sullivan, in *Ivanhoe*, 'was trying to produce a characteristically English type of opera which had existed … since 1826 … The form continued to develop throughout the nineteenth century and *Ivanhoe* was a legitimate example of it.' The tendency to conceive a musical stage work in terms of scenic, visual tableaux and discrete musical numbers has in fact accompanied English opera throughout the centuries. In part this might stem from the nation's decidedly literary culture and (to a lesser extent) visual imagination; the achievements of English writers and painters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are undeniably considerably higher than that of composers. The historical lineage of Sullivan's work can be traced back through

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incident. Gillian Beer, speaking of the 'loss of teleological order' in Victorian literary and scientific writing, comments that 'the organisation of Dickens's novels shifts from the picaresque, which can include the random events of everyday in the onward dynamism of the journey, to a profuse interconnection of events and characters so extreme as to seem to defy any overall meaning. Instead the activity of such novels ranges out towards infinity rather in the manner of medieval ornament.' Similarly, 'the unruly superfluity of Darwin's material at first gives an impression of superfecundity without design. Only gradually and retrospectively does the force of the argument emerge from the profusion of example. Such profusion, *is*, as in Dickens, the argument: variability, struggle, the power of generation and of generations … are exemplified abundantly.' Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983): 46, 48.

[27]   Letter to W.S. Gilbert, 2 April 1884, in Herbert Sullivan and Newman Flower, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: His Life, Letters & Diaries* (London: Cassell, 1927): 140.

[28]   On the historical background to the composition and premiere of the work see Andrew Lamb, '*Ivanhoe* and the Royal English Opera', *The Musical Times*, 114 (1973): 475–8; Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan*, 324–6; and Jeff S. Dailey, *Sir Arthur Sullivan's Grand Opera 'Ivanhoe' and its Theatrical and Musical Precursors: Adaptations of Sir Walter Scott's Novel for the Stage, 1819–1891* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2008): chapter 5.

its English operatic antecedents into the twentieth century – from the pageant-like structure of Jacobean Masques, Purcell's semi-operas and incidental music, the discrete numbers of eighteenth-century ballad opera and the nineteenth-century Romantic school of Bishop, Macfarren, Balfe, Wallace and Benedict, to the novelistic tableau of Vaughan Williams's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the stylized numbers-within-scenes of Britten's *Peter Grimes* and historical scene-portraits of *Gloriana*.[29] Indeed it forms an important link between the stage-play-with-music song-and-dialogue format of its precursors to the larger-scale scene opera of the twentieth century.

There is no doubt that Sullivan's opera was furthermore perceived by his contemporaries as being characteristically English, be it through plot, formal design or music. The *Illustrated London News* reviewing an early performance held that

> there is set forth on its stage a story which is the inalienable birthright of every Englishman; and the story is told to music which is, above and before everything, English. 'In spite of all temptations to belong to other nations' – Wagner exhorting to be unmelodious and to transfer what tunes he may have from the performers' mouths to the orchestra, Gounod whispering him to leave all and follow Faust, Verdi and Ponchielli inviting his to be that 'devil incarnate, an Englishman Italianate' – Sir Arthur remains an Englishman.[30]

Yet it is notable here that the composer, in his recorded statements regarding his operatic intentions, was quite strikingly unconcerned with trying to create a national style – this despite his indisputable wish to write a national work. In a well-known interview given to the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1885, Sullivan presented his aesthetic aims for the Grand Opera project that would find fruition five years later in *Ivanhoe*:

> The opera of the future is a compromise. I have thought and worked and toiled and dreamed of it. Not the French school, with gaudy and tinsel tunes, its lambent light and shades, its theatrical effects and clap-trap, not the Wagnerian school, with its sombreness and heavy ear-splitting airs, with its mysticism and unreal sentiment; not the Italian school, with its fantastic airs and *fioriture* and far-fetched effects. It is a compromise between these three – a sort of eclectic school, a selection of the merits of each one. I myself will make an attempt to produce a grand opera of this new school. Yes, it will be a historical work, and it is the dream of my life. I do not believe in operas based on gods and myths. That is the fault of the German school.[31]

Underpinning the great national venture that was *Ivanhoe* was apparently the belief that a national mix of styles, an 'eclectic compromise' between diverse

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[29] See Martin Yates, 'The Knight and the Queen. *Ivanhoe* and *Gloriana*: Two National Operas', in *Sullivan's Ivanhoe*, 112; Jonathan Strong, '*Ivanhoe* Explained', *Sir Arthur Sullivan Society Magazine*, 61 (Winter 2005): 20.

[30] *Illustrated London News*, 7 February 1891; the last reference is of course an allusion to *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

[31] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 July 1885. Some of the claims in this interview should be taken with a pinch of salt, though there is no reason to doubt the general veracity of this particular statement. Sullivan's strong sense of patriotism also shines through in his efforts for promoting British musicians in place of continental rivals, though he pointedly admits here that nationalism is a category more appropriate to the artist than to art per se. See Arthur Lawrence, *Arthur Sullivan – Life Story, Letters and Reminiscences* (London: James Bowden, 1899): 210.

European influences, will end up sufficiently English. (The English language, after all, is nothing if not eclectic in its sources.) A further possible inference is that attempting to define national identity in terms of exclusive stylistic categories may not always be a fruitful undertaking in music. At any rate, Sullivan was not unduly concerned with it.[32]

In this problematizing of musical style as a bearer of national identity Sullivan is taking up an important theme of Scott's novel, mentioned repeatedly in the opening chapters and thereon throughout the book: language, more precisely the linguistic divide separating the Saxons from the Normans, seen both as a cause of the enmity between the two and as a metaphor for it.

> French was the language of honour, of chivalry, and even of justice, while the far more manly and expressive Anglo-Saxon was abandoned to the use of rustics and hinds, who knew no other. Still, however, the necessary intercourse between the lords of the soil, and those oppressed inferior beings by whom that soil was cultivated, occasioned the gradual formation of a dialect, compounded betwixt the French and the Anglo-Saxon, in which they could render themselves mutually intelligible to each other; and from this necessity arose by degrees the structure of our present English language, in which the speech of the victors and the vanquished have been so happily blended together; and which has since been so richly improved by importations from the classical languages, and from those spoken by the southern nations of Europe.[33]

Ultimately it is with the intermingling and fusion of the two languages, cultures and peoples that the English as a nation will find their identity. While language divides most of the characters of the novel, heroic figures such as Ivanhoe (a Saxon by birth) and Richard (a Norman) appear to move easily

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[32] Admittedly Sullivan is himself using stylistic characteristics to define Italian, French and German operatic traditions, but this notwithstanding, it is noteworthy that he is shows little ambition for creating a stylistic 'Englishness in music'. The question arising as to *how* Sullivan's music is English is rather intractable. It is often noted that nationalism in music arises as much out of the extra-musical discourse surrounding it as from any clearly definable stylistic characteristics of the musical material itself. Nationalism in nineteenth-century music is often defined, like exoticism, by what it is not – by its departure from an 'unmarked' German style. A point made by Dahlhaus (Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980): 95–9, and *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J.B. Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989): 306) and amplified in Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 6 volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): volume 3, 346. Sullivan does define his opera as *not* German, French or Italian, but makes the more unusual further step of saying that it consists, rather, of influences of all these combined. As a consequence, it is difficult analytically to pin down this purported English quality (cf. James Day, *Englishness in Music: From Elizabethan Times to Elgar, Tippett, and Britten* (London: Thames, 1999): especially 146–50). Likewise, though one can suggest various influences on Sullivan in this work – Wagner here, Bizet there, a more general background style Sullivan had cultivated from mid-century Italian and French opera – it is often not at all straightforward defining whether a given part of *Ivanhoe* is, say, French or Italian. Perhaps it had better suffice to say that Sullivan's mixed language proved itself perfectly apt for a national opera in that it resulted in something readily perceived by audiences as having an essential Englishness to it, despite the problems we may encounter in attempting to demonstrate this quality more precisely.

[33] Scott, *Ivanhoe*, chapter 1, 17.

between the two, offering a glimpse of the future path to national identity that will come through their fusion.

The parallels with Sullivan's own attitude to blending European styles for his English opera are indeed striking. Sullivan, it seems, even takes this suggestion further in his stylistic characterization of the ethnicities of the principal participants in his story. Most evident is the respective characterization given to the Saxons (through the opera's opening motive, associated with the Saxon Cedric's Hall of Rotherwood) and to the Norman Knight/Chivalry theme that appears soon after at Cedric's words 'his knights, his Norman knights'. The former, marked *pesante*, moves vigorously upwards through a C major arpeggio, initially played in simple octaves, the short, three-bar melodic phrase restricted to the notes of the pentatonic collection and its subsequent simple harmonization (bars 7–18) diatonic, almost modal. In short, it is a perfect musical analogue of the 'manly', 'rustic', somewhat unrefined Saxons, yet the absent opening beat (a quaver rest) creates a slightly precipitous sense to the proceedings (Ex. 2a). This material, on its continuation, is gradually infiltrated by destabilizing chromaticism, a descending bass line dragging the music down to relative-minor areas until a *sforzando* blow sends the music scurrying down in semiquavers to a dominant pedal of A minor, over which Cedric enters with his opening lament for the state of England – set unsurprisingly to a descending melodic line.[34] Within the first minute of the opera Sullivan has encapsulated musically the fall of the Saxon society depicted, from hearty C major life, through a gradual decline and, via the hammer blows of the $D_{\sharp3}^6$ chord (a pre-dominant in both C or A minor, which therefore, like the original battle, could resolve either way), to oppression in its shadow A minor.

Ex. 2a   **Sullivan:** *Ivanhoe*, **Act 1 Scene 1, opening, Saxon/Rotherwood Theme**

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[34]   Scalic descents in music have a long history of association with painful, sorrowful sentiments. The baroque *lamento* bass (typically a chromatic fall from degree $\Rightarrow 8$ to $\Rightarrow 5$) and the melodic descent $\Rightarrow 5\text{-} \Rightarrow 1$ are two classic archetypes.

Ex. 2b   Sullivan: *Ivanhoe*, Act 1 Scene 1 [G+20], Norman/Knight Theme

The Norman theme, meanwhile, suggested in embryo in Cedric's opening grievance, makes its full appearance a few minutes later at the entrance of the knights De Bracy and Bois-Guilbert (the Templar) (Ex. 2b). It immediately makes its difference known. Whereas the Saxons are given a short, curt three-bar phrase that is prone to simple repetition and fragmentation, the Norman theme, in contrast, is formed from a sophisticated melody spun out into thirty-six bars – a compound period in analytical parlance, formed from two matching eighteen-bar phrases with a three-bar codetta appended to their end. Rising similarly through a major arpeggio, the Normans start more sedately, only reaching the octave level after five *moderato* beats (the Saxons take barely two *allegro* crotchets), but eventually climb to even greater heights as the music ascends to the F another octave above; if they are slower starters, Norman canniness wins out over Saxon choleric. The theme is given a certain

sophistication by the opening triplet figure, the distinction created against the subsequent dotted rhythms, and the syncopations across the middle of the bar, while grace-notes ornament the melody and chromaticism the harmony. The phrase is set to a descending bass line which gives a sense of directionality to the music, though might also suggest a more metaphorical fall or the seeds of decline; after its assured beginning the long melodic phrase soon passes through a passage of harmonic uncertainty (bars 9–12) that results in a more aimless repetition of fragmentary one-bar units, before dominant harmony is attained and the consequent phrase can return to the confidence of the opening.

The contrast between the two themes, and whom they symbolize, is in one sense clear: rude Saxon health versus decadent Norman refinement. Yet, in truth, the two musical ideas are hardly that removed from each other in basic outline: the opening motives of both arpeggiate a simple ascending major triad. Though Sullivan does not offer an eventual fusion of the two in his opera (which would after all be premature within the bounds of Scott's story),[35] one could easily imagine one.[36] The Saxons and Normans have more in common than they think.

As for the two figures that stand to some extent above the warring ethnic distinctions, Ivanhoe himself is not given a clear reminiscence theme or individual *Leitmotiv*, though a short figure heard as he announces (in the third person, *incognito*) that Ivanhoe will meet the Templar's challenge recurs when he enters into combat, in keeping with this promise (Act 1 Scene 3; Act 3 Scene 3, sometimes called the 'Pledge' motive). The theme given in Ex. 2b that is usually associated with the Normans is not, however, restricted in use to Norman subjects but is heard elsewhere in the opera taking on a broader connotation of knightly chivalry – the ideal the Normans introduced but did not always live up to. It is heard at Rowena's entrance in Act 1 Scene 1, and furthermore in an altered version at the conclusion of the joust in Act 1 Scene 3 after Ivanhoe is declared to have defeated Bois-Guilbert. The initial minor-key inflections here could be held to refer to the Templar's defeat, but its graceful continuation, as Ivanhoe is lead forward to receive the victorious crown from Rowena, suggests that the knightly chivalry Ivanhoe has learned from the Normans finds its true representative in the Saxon knight.

This nuanced interpretation of one of the positive counterparts of the Norman conquest, a beautiful ideal that rarely found active embodiment, is wholly in keeping with Scott's views on medieval chivalry,[37] and encapsulates Ivanhoe's

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[35]   At the close of the novel Scott claims that 'it was not until the reign of Edward the Third that the mixed language, now termed English, was spoken at the court of London, and that the hostile distinction of Norman and Saxon seems entirely to have disappeared' (*Ivanhoe*, chapter 44, 398).

[36]   The Norman theme is in fact preceded by an arpeggiated fanfare that to some extend mediates between the forthcoming theme and the Saxon material. Elsewhere, such as in Act 3 Scene 1 (the link revealed between the motive just heard in Ivanhoe's 'Come, gentle sleep' and Ulrica's earlier 'Wave your long tresses' from Act 2 Scene 3), Sullivan shows himself adept at combining or creating unexpected links between separate motives.

[37]   'Sharply critical of chivalry in practice, he could nonetheless praise the ideal', describing it as 'a beautiful and fantastic piece of frostwork which has dissolved in the beams of the sun' (Chandler, 'Chivalry and Romance', 189; Scott, 'Essay on Chivalry', in *Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 28 volumes (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1836–1850): volume 6, 124). Scott's respectful though critical attitude finds its expression in the scene between Rebecca and the wounded Ivanhoe in the novel (chapter 29) – most of which was cut in Sturgis's adaptation.

defining quality as a figure uniting the best of Saxon and Norman worlds.[38] King Richard, on the other hand, as (arguably implausibly) in Scott's original, is happy switching into the language of his Saxon subjects, indeed mimicking the musical speech of anyone, including himself.[39] If anything, this errant regal hero seems something approaching a self-parody in Sullivan's setting; adept at exchanging linguistic banter with the Saxon Tuck (Act 2 Scene 1), he repeatedly lapses into self-quotation (Act 3 Scene 2), his reminiscence theme marking his presence rather too overtly in a manner that suggests a gentle ironic intent on Sullivan's part towards this larger-than-life, somewhat two-dimensional character – mirroring Scott's warm yet critical attitude to the king.[40]

In *Ivanhoe*, then, Sullivan is not only consciously combining what he saw as the best elements from continental opera to create his national English work – in this offering a remarkable parallel to one of Scott's overriding themes – but also taking up Scott's thematicization of language as part of his musical characterization. What is also clear is that, historically, Sullivan is in no sense desirous of seeing his music participating in a radical stream of stylistic development but is happy to work with largely pre-existent musical forms and techniques, assimilating multiple influences into the idiom he wishes. He therefore stands outside the notion of a single (implicitly Germanic) line of artistic progress, both in the historical quality of his music and in its polystylism. His music is more conservative in idiom, largely intentionally – from here stems its accessibility and popularity, necessary qualities for the national opera he was endeavouring to write – but in another sense is simultaneously 'thicker' and richer in its temporality: it contains more 'history' within it.

Constructing National Identity through History

For such a determining work of national identity the choice of subject was highly significant. Sir Walter Scott was an obvious source for the story; as the effective creator of the historical novel as a genre, Scott loomed large over any treatment of such subject matter, and although the age of European-wide Scott-euphoria was long gone by the late-Victorian era he was an established classic and cornerstone of the British literary tradition.[41] Sullivan had previously toyed with

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[38] 'Wilfred of Ivanhoe, a true Saxon but with the energy and chivalric nature of a Norman – and with more Norman prudence than the misplaced generosity of Richard suggests is possessed by the born Norman – represents the possibility of progress.' Clare A. Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990): 85.

[39] Scott's conceit of having Richard converse in the Saxon language has been frequently criticized as far-fetched (he himself admitted as such in a note to the 'Magnum' edition), yet this no doubt historically inaccurate depiction of the Norman brothers Richard and John as distinguishable by their respective sympathy/hostility to the Saxon population played a huge role in subsequent readings of English history. See Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest*, 75–6, 84–5.

[40] One could also note Sullivan's possible homage to operatic history in that it is Grétry's *Richard Coeur-de-Lion* (1784) that features the first clear use of a reminiscence theme in an opera – the romance 'Une fièvre brûlante', which appears nine times across its three acts – a technique that would be developed most famously in Wagner's *Leitmotiv*.

[41] Nineteenth-century operas on Scott subjects are also legion; a survey is provided in Jerome Mitchell's *The Walter Scott Operas* and his follow-up *More Scott Operas: Further Analyses of Operas Based on the Works of Sir Walter Scott* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996).

Scott subjects in his masque 'Kenilworth' (to words by Henry F. Chorley from Scott's novel), his 'Marmion' Overture (after the poem of 1808) and in a handful of songs. *Ivanhoe*, from 1819, was Scott's nod to creating an explicitly English historical novel in the manner of his highly successful series of Scottish novels following *Waverley*, and as contemporary sales abundantly demonstrated (the first print run of 8,000 copies sold out in two weeks) the move was an astute ploy by the author.

What Scott had achieved in constructing a (sometimes imagined) Scottish identity in his earlier works he would equally accomplish for the English in *Ivanhoe. Ivanhoe* would become not only hugely successful in Scott's own time but a major influence on the Victorian imagination in its portrayal of the medieval past. Writers such as Carlyle, Newman and Ruskin would attest to the importance of this work on the formation of Victorian Britain's consciousness of this earlier period, in part itself awakening this historical interest. The infamous Eglinton Tournament (1839) took much of its historical inspiration from Scott's novel, and historians as diverse as Macaulay and Thierry were influenced by Scott's creative retelling of history.[42] *Ivanhoe* did not actually start the medieval revival (this was already underway in Scott's time), but it did provide the defining paradigm for interpreting the Norman period: as historian Clare Simmons puts it, 'Sir Walter Scott's 1819 novel *Ivanhoe* is the one work to which all later depictions of Saxons and Normans, either directly or indirectly, owe a debt.'[43] For Sullivan's audience the subject matter would have further chimed with the near-obsession in Victorian Britain with the medieval past, be it the Arthurian subjects of the Pre-Raphaelites or the Tennyson of the *Idylls of the King* (1856–1885).

Ivanhoe, in common with most of Scott's mature work, is historical but fictional – an idealized version of what might have happened, capturing the essence of this momentous period (or how at any rate the nineteenth century wished to see it), when Britain, as the Victorians knew it, was emerging from the dark ages. Set in the late twelfth century at the time of the Third Crusade, the narrative paints a picture of an heroic, chivalric England of Richard the Lionheart – of Robin Hood, knights, Templars, monks, outlaws, jousts and damsels in distress – yet still unsettled from the aftermath of the Norman invasion. It presents, as it were, the essence, not the accidental events of the past, Aristotle's privileging of poetry over history, yet a poetic fiction which is historically located, a idealized paradigm to stand for it all.

The liberties Scott took with history (despite the erudite antiquarianism he also displayed) have frequently been noted by critics. The author even offered a disarming account of these anachronisms in the novel's introduction: 'It may be that I have introduced little which can positively be termed modern; but, on the other hand, it is extremely probable that I may have confused the manners of two or three centuries, and introduced, during the reign of Richard the First, circumstances appropriated to a period either considerably earlier, or a good deal later than that era.'[44] These anachronisms, however, typically serve an important

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42 See David Brown, *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Alice Chandler, 'Sir Walter Scott and the Medieval Revival', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 19 (1965): 315–332, and *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970): 54–7; Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest*, chapter 3.
43 Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest*, 76.
44 Scott, *Ivanhoe*, 'Dedicatory Epistle' from Laurence Templeton, 12.

purpose. The objective was to make the past come alive, to live again, not merely in order to escape from the realities of nineteenth-century industrial Britain but so as to come to an understanding of the present in terms of the past. Scott thus placed the emphasis on the commonalities between the historical England and the present, searching for 'that extensive neutral ground [between ancient and modern], the proportion, that is, of manners and sentiments which are common to us and to our ancestors, which have been handed down unaltered from them to us, or which, arising out of the principles of our common nature, must have existed alike in either state of society.'[45]

In this light, we can understand the historical compression of the middle-ages in Scott's story, the imagined temporal coexistence of chronologically distinct times. Belief in dark-age Germanic and Norse gods and eleventh-century epigones from the Norman conquest fuse with the fourteenth-century tournament, the historically uncertain Robin of Locksley with the reign of Richard I (an enduring legacy of the author). As Alice Chandler shows, Scott had been influenced by his friend, the historian Sharon Turner, whose organicist, progressive view of history understood individual stages as running through a tripartite model of crude beginnings, mature flowering, and finally decadence and decline. The Saxon society and code of knightly chivalry depicted in *Ivanhoe* both conform to this pattern, but whereas in Scott's *Anne of Geierstein* the three stages are encountered successively, in *Ivanhoe* they are found simultaneously, conforming to what the historian Reinhart Koselleck has called the 'simultaneity of the non-simultaneous'.[46] The resulting compression of diachronic history into a synchronic snapshot of multiple layers adds to the iconic properties of *Ivanhoe*. The iconic mode thus fuses the middle-ages, from the earliest Saxon times to the late Norman period, into one defining moment of vision, and holds this up as a mirror to the present.

Here the analysis of the iconic mode in *Ivanhoe* reveals a perfect dramaturgical means for conveying such an idealized history as the carrier of the essence of a nation. As Bernard Beckerman writes, 'there is something in the nature of this [iconic] process that seeks to concretize itself, to resist change, to make itself into a permanent emblem.'[47] Indeed, such means of presentation can easily be used to reaffirm existing cultural and political values in a manner that suits conservative constructions of national identity. 'In a world where iconic time holds sway, change can only produce corruption, for where there is perfection, the ideal, whatever its nature, can only endure; it can never improve.'[48]

Yet when we compare this iconic method of dramaturgical presentation with the content of the plot, we see a notable contradiction emerging. For the world which is being presented before our eyes is not one of a steady, timeless state conforming to a fixed social, ethnic or religious identity, but records a constant process of struggle, compromise and accommodation between Saxon, Norman and Jewish constituents of early medieval society. This vision of Merrie England

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[45]   Scott, *Ivanhoe*, 'Dedicatory Epistle' from Laurence Templeton, 9.
[46]   Chandler, 'Chivalry and Romance', 188–90; Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).
[47]   Bernard Beckerman, *Theatrical Presentation*, 46.
[48]   Bernard Beckerman, 'Historic and Iconic Time in Late Tudor Drama', in *Shakespeare, Man of the Theater*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1983): 48.

under the despotic stand-in Prince John is no more settled than the political unrest of 1819, of Peterloo and the excesses of Prince George's regency (this despite Scott's own monarchist leanings). In fact, the message of Scott's and Sullivan's work seems opposed to much conventional nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalism – the portrayal of the nation and its identity as a fixed, perfect, timeless entity. Here we see the conflict that is history in the making – historically located (if partially fictitious and idealized) – as if this struggle, this uneasy mix of races and religion, is itself the timeless truth of history and English identity, just as Sullivan (who by ancestry was more Irish and Italian than English) favours his 'eclectic' school of various French, German and Italian influences to make up his ideal English national opera.[49]

In this sense, *Ivanhoe*'s conception is the opposite of, say, Wagnerian music drama – an ahistorical, 'timeless' mythology presented more or less dramatic-dialectically – and by extension, a type of art beloved of the more disreputable face of nationalism and twentieth-century fascism – the essence of a nation as stable, closed, unable to endure the threat of change.[50] Rather, it demonstrates 'that being English is something you can ''put on'': it is a perpetual process of becoming'.[51] The relationship between ethnicity and custom is particularly significant here; Scott reads English identity not along racial lines but in terms of shared culture. The obsession with maintaining the purity of the royal Saxon bloodline which Cedric is victim to is painted in no uncertain terms as flawed: his Saxon exemplar Athelstane is the embodiment of decline. It is Cedric's disinherited son, by combining the best elements of Norman and Saxon, who offers the path to the future. Revising an earlier trend which saw pre-1066 society as a golden age that was lost by the imposed feudalism of the invaders, Scott offers an influential re-reading of the so-called Norman Yoke, suggesting that the conquest was ultimately a positive event in the history of England. This reinterpretation of the past necessary for believing in the progress desired by the nineteenth-century historical outlook therefore transfers utopia from a lost past into the future. The message of 1819 is even more pointed in Sullivan's 1890s Britain, at the height of Empire and confidence.

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[49] Much attention has been devoted to the question of the modern formation of national identity in recent decades; for a range of accounts see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991). Of course Scott was hardly English, and Sullivan's librettist, Julian Sturgis, American. Scott, while influenced by the so-called Whig view of history, was nonetheless a Tory, though it is harder to place Sullivan politically; Jacobs notes that politics, alongside contemporaneous controversies within art, aesthetics and philosophy, seemed to draw no response from the composer (*Arthur Sullivan*, 56). The interpretation offered here is thus not intended to adumbrate a conscious political message on Sullivan's part (since it seems unlikely he thought of art in such a politicized manner) but rather to fill out the implications his work holds within the viewpoint he professed.

[50] The above claim is not intended to suggest that Wagner's operatic output is necessarily or essentially fascistic, though elements of it can obviously easily be accommodated into this viewpoint. Of course Wagner's most clearly nationalistic (and allegedly anti-Semitic) mature work, *Die Meistersinger*, is an exception to this in that it is more-or-less historically located and unmythological.

[51] Robert J. C. Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008): 19.

This interpretation is borne out by Robert Young's influential recent reading of the change in English identity across the nineteenth century towards an inclusive multi-ethnic sense of shared culture and ideals that could incorporate any external element.[52] Sullivan's opera, appearing at the end of this era, is thus not exceptional in its message but reflects a wider discourse on the nature of Englishness that had been ongoing throughout the century. By returning to Scott – and *Ivanhoe* in particular – Sullivan is reformulating one of the most potent sources for the construction of this idea of Englishness. Young notes that 'it was above all in *Ivanhoe* that Scott is commonly reckoned to have invented English national cultural identity'. Yet 'Scott's portrait … allowed for two simultaneous interpretations.'[53] At first a Saxonist reading of English identity predominated, seeing the superiority of the native Saxons over the Norman invaders (and implicitly, of contemporary England over its Celtic neighbours), as found in the writings of Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Arnold in the 1840s. But gradually, through the researches of racial science and ethnography and such influential intellectual figures as Matthew Arnold (in works like 'On the Study of Celtic Literature' and *Culture and Anarchy*), a more humane, inclusive conception of English ethnicity was promulgated, thus emphasizing the integrative elements present in Scott's narrative. Over the next few decades, the years of imperial expansion, 'Arnold's idea of an inclusive English ethnicity was opened out so as to include the English diaspora beyond'.[54] Scott's original contribution to this understanding of Englishness was therefore, as Ian Duncan comments, that 'the multiple valencies of a heterogeneous English equip it to absorb any cultural element', with the consequence that 'the colonial origins of modern England, the mixing and tempering of its stock by foreign conquest, have produced its modern world-imperial fitness'.[55]

Both Scott's novel and Sullivan's opera exhibit a peculiar openness of ending. The victorious conclusion to the novel features the symbolic marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena, vouchsafing for English society the happy fusion of Norman and Saxon elements in coming generations:

> These distinguished nuptials were celebrated by the attendance of the high-born Normans, as well as Saxons, joined with the universal jubilee of the lower orders, that marked the marriage of two individuals as a type of the future peace and harmony betwixt two races, which, since that period, have been so completely mingled that the distinction has become utterly invisible.[56]

Yet Rebecca – as most readers have felt, the true heroine of the story – and her father, Isaac, choose voluntary exile to Moorish Granada in Scott's version, trusting an unequal yet secure existence under the Muslims Richard has been fighting rather than the assurances of the king of this still untamed and sporadically barbaric land. Scott's medieval England is still a work in progress. As Northrop Frye, emphasizing the pessimistic element of Scott's conservatism, remarks, 'the struggles he describes are within the cycle of history, and never suggest any ultimate transcending of history'.[57]

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[52] Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*.
[53] Ibid., 37.
[54] Ibid., 179.
[55] Ian Duncan, Introduction to Oxford World Classics edition of *Ivanhoe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): xix.
[56] Scott, *Ivanhoe*, chapter 44, 398.
[57] Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture*, 164.

In Sullivan, the closing chorus opens out into a beautiful moment of lyricism, recapitulating a theme briefly heard in an earlier scene (Act 3 Scene 2), yet for all this apparent serenity the ensemble juxtaposes three different, contrasting sentiments. While the Saxons Ivanhoe, Rowena, the reconciled Cedric and their surrogate-Saxon monarch Richard sing a conventional paean to all-conquering love, the soon-to-be exiled Templars grouse moodily over their papal authority from distant Rome (the proto-Protestantism of the message clear for all), while Rebecca, as if lost in a higher world, sings of the true temple of her religion.[58] The end of the story is closed and yet open. Both works depict assimilation and exclusion, simultaneously sustaining optimistic and more sceptical readings, presenting 'in unidealized form the possibilities of reconciliation and continued division'.[59]

Ivanhoe thus captures a dynamic moment of becoming when English history – England as the Victorians thought they knew it, securely held and possessed – was being made. It captures a dynamic event through the prism of the iconic mode, *sub specie aeternitatis*. And its message seems to be that this history is an ongoing process of accommodation between the human actors that are its participants, and that the nation which has arisen from this is essentially a mixture of diverse, heterogeneous elements, which makes the search for a singular national identity a chimera.

Postscript: Sullivan's Music in History

For a final consideration of the relationship between *Ivanhoe* and time we could return to the question of Sullivan's music within history. *Ivanhoe*, and Sullivan's music in general, is, as stated, rightly considered conservative judged against broad tendencies in European music. Certainly it attempts no revolution or radical reformulation of musical language, and neither, can we suppose, would Sullivan have wanted to – at least for its own sake. Yet just as the richness of artistic history should not be reduced to one narrow strand of development, so is Sullivan's music not without its own originality and uniqueness. In an interview reported by *The Musical World* in 1885, Sullivan revealingly claims that the 'Golden age' of German music ended with Schumann and Italian opera with Donizetti.[60] This could, of course, be dismissed as merely the hallmark of artistic epigonism by critics who know better what is considered acceptable within modernist ideology, but that would be to substitute unthinking rejection for aesthetic understanding. For Sullivan, the development of music since the mid-nineteenth century might well not be what he would consider an improvement. His music prizes something that was lost in music since then – a formal lucidity, directness of communication and accessibility of comprehension, a cleaner, more transparent yet no less colourful orchestral patina.

There is a clear link with Scott again here, in the simultaneity of the historically non-simultaneous seen in *Ivanhoe*, the willingness to intersperse historically diverse

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[58]   Indeed, religiously the Jewish Rebecca is the only serious figure in the whole story. The Saxon Christian Friar Tuck is a lovable rogue, an honest drinking fellow who can wield a sword and luckily doesn't take his religion too earnestly, and the Normans (read Catholics) lascivious foreign rapists. The Protestant reconfiguring of early English history also bears comparison with that at the close of Tennyson's 'The Coming of Arthur' (*Idylls of the King*), with Arthur's dismissal of the Lords of Rome.

[59]   Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest*, 78.

[60]   *The Musical World*, 24 January 1885.

materials, the casual attitude to 'anachronisms' in the interest of what the artist saw as the message of common humanity. (This analogy between the two is well worth consideration, though to a certain extent it is limited, as Sullivan is not setting out to write 'historical' music in the same sense as Scott is creating the historical novel; the two art forms are not precisely comparable.)

It is here, too, that the comparison with the Pre-Raphaelite movement already suggested by some Sullivan commentators may prove more fruitful. The creed of the 'adherence to the simplicity of art' announced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1850 finds an echo in Sullivan's aesthetics of clarity and emotional directness, his avoidance of 'unnecessary complications or diffuseness', his 'maxim of respecting the fitness of things' and deliberate simplicity of means.[61] Sullivan would probably also have agreed with Ruskin's defence of the Pre-Raphaelites: that 'progress has in some things taken place is perfectly true; but it is true also that this progress is by no means the main thing to be noticed respecting ancient and modern art; that there are other circumstances, connected with the change from one to the other, immeasurably more important, and which, until very lately, have been altogether lost sight of.'[62] William Parry has left the following pregnant observation on this connection:

> Clearly Sullivan was a friend of people like Millais and Burne-Jones, who were the leading Pre-Raphaelite artists. (Millais painted the portrait of Sullivan that now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.) But there seem to me two other important links to the Pre-Raphaelite world. One might be Sullivan's approach to orchestration which seems very colourful, free of modern pigments, to be free of augmentation. And to that extent he seems to be almost like Pre-Raphaelites who were seeking to go back to a purer, more colourful, simpler time before Raphael, before the time when they thought that painting was ruined by modern influence. … But there is also the fact that he shares with the Pre-Raphaelites an obsession with the medieval, the dark ages, the middle ages. So in works such as *The Golden Legend*, *Ivanhoe*, *Haddon Hall*, *King Arthur* there is this continued preoccupation with that time when early English history was being created. The Victorians were incredibly keen on the dark ages and the medieval world from which Britain had emerged.[63]

Beyond the common interest in idealized historical topics from the medieval past and a pellucid, simpler use of colour and timbre in their work, by returning to aspects of earlier art prematurely left behind by the march of progress such artists achieve something 'new', original, distinct and deeply characteristic, even without attempting progress as such. Through the impossible attempt to return, something original is produced, creating a byway from the linear, mono-directional course of art usually narrated.

With Sullivan this is revealed by a peculiar subtlety of harmonic and orchestral colour which draws on soft pastel shades and deep yet translucent hues, a new flexibility of melodic line that while deriving from conventional periodic phrasing eludes capture within this familiar framework, and a more

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[61] Title page of the first issue of *The Germ: Thoughts towards Nature in Poetry, Literature and Art*, 1 January 1850; Alexander C. Mackenzie, 'The Life-Work of Arthur Sullivan', *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, 3/3 (May 1902): 539–540.

[62] John Ruskin, 'Lectures on Architecture and Painting' (1853), Lecture IV: Pre-Raphaelitism, in *Pre-Raphaelitism: Lectures On Architecture & Painting, &c.* (London: J.M. Dent, 1906): 152.

[63] William Parry, Interview for the SWR radio series 'Der englische Komponist Arthur Sullivan', broadcast in June/July 2005.

general atmosphere, a gentle tincture that seeps over the dreamy historical setting which is unique to these pieces. This can be observed especially in Sullivan's work from the later 1880s and early 1890s such as *The Golden Legend*, *Ivanhoe* and *King Arthur*, even in parts of *Haddon Hall*, *The Beauty Stone* and *The Emerald Isle*.[64] In Rowena's hymn to the moon and her subsequent duet with Ivanhoe (Act 1 Scene 2), in the outdoor forest scenes of Copmanhurst, Ivanhoe's dawn 'Happy with winged feet' (Act 3 Scene 1), the accumulated pathos of Rebecca's plea to the Templar (Act 2 Scene 3) and the final chorus, the music swelling, ebbing and flowing yet higher, successive waves in one seemingly elastic, inexhaustible melodic line like the banner of England that there is unfurled, there is an indefinable stamp of a lyricism unique to Sullivan at this time, a conception that stands outside the tramlines of European musical progress, one that speaks of a more secret, undisclosed realm that is inimitably itself.

Ivanhoe is an uneven opera; alongside its moments of inspiration it has its fair share of longueurs (which opera doesn't?), and had Sullivan only been granted the health and summoned up the dedication to complete further works along these lines it is to be expected his achievement would have been the more considerable. Yet there is enough in *Ivanhoe* and the works he did complete to show us more than fleeting glimpses of this unique musical world, and for this those who listen to it unencumbered by a century of critical abuse must be thankful.

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[64] Scene 6 of *The Golden Legend* is probably the best illustration of these traits and one of the high-points of Sullivan's oeuvre.