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Phillip A. Cooke and David Maw, eds., *The Music of Herbert Howells*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013. xxi + 360 pp. ISBN 978-1-84383-879-1.

Even three decades after his death, the reasons for the general scholarly neglect of Herbert Howells (1892–1983) remain obscure. After all, his impeccable academic and establishment credentials—graduate of and longtime faculty member at the Royal College of Music, accomplished organist, recipient of the CBE and the CH, president of multiple professional organizations (including the Royal College of Organists and the Incorporated Society of Musicians)—placed him squarely at the center of professional musical life in Britain, and his contributions to Anglican church music, both in amount and quality, rank as the most significant of the twentieth century. Yet prior to 2013, only three scholarly monographs dedicated to Howells had been published (two of them by the same author) (Palmer 1978, Palmer 1992/1996, and Spicer 1998), none of which took Howells’s music as the primary focus.

Enter Phillip Cooke's and David Maw's *The Music of Herbert Howells*, the first book to tackle the rich and varied musical offerings of Howells's nearly seven-decade career. While the editors note that this collection "is not intended to be a comprehensive or synoptic account of Howells's musical output" (p. 2), its fifteen essays adopt a wide variety of methodologies and treatments, including genre surveys, stylistic analysis and critique, reception history, studies of working methods, and hermeneutics. The articles are divided into five broad groups encompassing Howells's "style, his writing for voices, his writing for instruments, his claims to being a modern and the impact of his mourning the death of his son" (p. 3). While the quality and tone of the essays vary widely, the range and scope of works considered within them is impressive, presenting Howells as a complex and mercurial figure, an image at odds with his reputation as a staid composition teacher and church musician.

Two of the stylistically-oriented essays stand out: Cooke's own "Austerity, Difficulty, and Retrospection: The Late Style of Herbert Howells," and Diane Nolan Cooke's "Window on a Complex Style: *Six Pieces for Organ*." Nolan Cooke treats the *Six Pieces* as a stylistic microcosm from which one can extrapolate traits of Howells's broader idiom. Elegantly presented, cogently argued, and engagingly written, it rides a fine line between hermeneutical

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assessment and stylistic analysis; her comments on Howells's "manneristic tendencies" are particularly insightful. Cooke's essay takes a different approach. Using Joseph Straus's "Disability and 'Late Style' in Music" as his starting point, (Straus 2008) Cooke emphasizes three of Straus's six signifiers as "the most prominent and pertinent to [Howells's] aesthetic: austerity, difficulty, and retrospection" (223). Cooke's study accomplishes two things: first, it rebuts claims that Howells went into a period of decline after completing the *Stabat Mater* in 1965. Second, he makes a strong case for imagining Howells as a composer of modernist works, "progressive to the core, experimental and increasingly self-conscious" (236), even in the twilight of his career.

While Cooke and Nolan Cooke's essays examine relatively broad areas of Howells's style and musical significance, others focus on specific pieces or practices. Two noteworthy contributions in this area include Paul Andrews's "Lost, Remembered, Mislaid, Rewritten: A Documentary Study of In Gloucestershire" and Byron Adams's "Musical Cenotaph: Howells's *Hymnus paradisi* and Sites of Mourning." Andrews, the author of a magisterial dissertation on Howells that includes the most thorough annotated catalogue I have seen—a revised and much truncated version of which is included as an appendix to this volume—tackles the complicated history of this oft-mentioned but rarely performed work. His systematic and meticulous documentation of its history is a model for others, and one hopes that his duties as a parish priest for the Diocese of Ely will not preclude him from further contributions to the field. Adams's essay, by contrast and like the man himself, is *sui generis* within this collection. This sprawling, richly textured article examines the links between Howells's greatest musical triumph, the *Hymnus paradisi*, and his greatest personal tragedy, the sudden death of his nine-year-old son, Michael, a trauma from which the composer never recovered. And yet such a summary does not do the essay justice, as it ranges over topics such as the clinical phenomenon of "complicated mourning," rituals of public remembrance that emerged in Britain after the Great War, Victorian-era literary tropes, Howells's employment of elegiac tropes elsewhere in his musical output, and the degree to which Edwin Lutyens's architectural style can be characterized as modernist—all of which serve to enrich and articulate the underlying design and aesthetic effect of Howells's masterwork.

There are a few editorial lapses and shortcomings throughout the book—some minor, others quite significant. For instance, several accounts of the death of Howells's RCM classmate, Francis Purcell "Bunny" Warren, claim that he was killed in 1914 during the Battle of Mons, when in fact he was killed two years later on the Somme. Adams gets this detail correct in his essay, but Lewis Foreman refers to the erroneous Mons story twice in his own article. Elsewhere, Jonathan Clinch's reference to the disruption of the first performance of Howells's Second Piano Concerto should have been cross-referenced with Foreman's reference to the same event, or vice versa, thus filling out the details for readers interested in the subject. More irritatingly, the citations in Jonathan White's chapter on the relationship between Howells and Stanford are plagued by irregularities in the assignation of page numbers and sources;

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this may be the fault of the author, but the editors should have caught and fixed these multiple errors.

Overall, however, this is a welcome and necessary book. Boydell is to be commended for its continuing dedication to British music, enhanced as always by its excellent attention to design. The insights this collection provides will undoubtedly encourage further scholarship on Howells, and the extensive bibliography and long-awaited thematic catalogue will ably assist those so inspired to examine the life and works of this often underrated yet deeply passionate artist.

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Tony Harris, *The Legacy of Cornelius Cardew*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. x + 217 pp. ISBN 978-1-4094-4810-5.

Any book that seeks to perpetuate the work of Cornelius Cardew (1936-81) is to be welcomed. Most famous for his 193-page graphic score *Treatise* and the cycle of seven large pieces grouped as *The Great Learning* (a work devised for the Scratch Orchestra), Cardew was known throughout his career not only as a composer but as a brilliant pianist, a teacher (I met him in 1967, when I began studying with him at the Royal Academy of Music), and a free improviser with the originally jazz-based group AMM. In the early 1970s he changed course radically and espoused Marxist-Leninist political activism, initially under the influence of Mao Tse-tung. His life was brutally cut short in 1981 by a hit-and-run driver, leaving unanswered questions as to the direction his compositional career might have taken.

As Tony Harris makes clear in his new book, the British musical establishment still tends either to ignore or misrepresent Cardew. His early works, written under the influence of the European avant-garde of the late 50s, are rarely played. His "second period," when he moved aesthetically to a position closer to that of John Cage and the American experimentalists and which culminated in the formation of the Scratch Orchestra and the composition of *Treatise* and *The Great Learning*, has been given more attention but continues to be dismissed by

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some commentators as redolent of late 60s “anything goes” hippiedom. His final phase, as dedicated political activist, is simply beyond the pale for most observers, and the largely tonal music that stemmed from this activism condemned as musically naïve and talking down to the audience for which it was intended.

Cardew’s legacy, then, is many-sided: a brilliant performer of his own and others’ works, an inspiring teacher, the fountainhead of musical experimentalism in Britain, and party political animal—so where does one begin? As a lecturer in music education at Nottingham Trent University, Harris is first and foremost concerned with the educational possibilities of Cardew’s music, and really gets into his stride when discussing the permeation of Cardew’s work into this small but significant area. Another positive result of this preoccupation is that Harris takes Cardew’s political work much more seriously than many previous commentators, and realizes that this is an important biographical and historical matter. Whether Cardew was truly successful in his attempt to find a “music for the masses” is less important than his sincere belief that such a stance was necessary – indeed the only one possible for him.

Harris presents his book for the most part biographically and chronologically, but with one curious exception; his second chapter is devoted to Cardew’s 1974 book *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*. In this collection of essays Cardew attempts to demolish what he calls the “bourgeois musical avant-garde,” including his own position within it. In his second period, Cardew, along with many experimental composers, sided with Cage and saw Stockhausen as the avant-garde “enemy.” In *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, however, Cardew lumps Stockhausen and Cage together as enemies of the proletariat, thus killing two birds with one stone. Harris takes Cardew at his word and seems to be confused as to whether Cage is experimental or avant-garde. *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* is a work very much of its decade, a polemic complete with Maoist-style sloganizing. I suspect Cardew might have come to re-examine his position with the passing of time and the gradual disillusion with Maoist dogma in Marxist-Leninist theory. What is clear is that for someone who is approaching Cardew for the first time, this chapter, placed so early in the book, tends to set a rather skewed view of the composer which inevitably proves detrimental to a balanced overview of his achievements.

The later chapters of Harris’s book attempt a definition of “Cardewism” (his rather painful term) as well as the survey of the educational qualities of Cardew’s music. These are hampered in part by the small number and sometimes odd choice of interviewees with whom Harris chose to engage. I see why he devotes space to the Cornelius Cardew Ensemble, since he is a member, but he does not connect that ensemble to Cardew and his music in a convincing way. And the emphasis seems solidly male-oriented: unfortunate when there are many strong women (Ilona Halberstadt and Carole Finer prominent among them) whose voices could have contributed a more balanced tone to the discussion.

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Harris began his book before the appearance of John Tilbury's magisterial biography of the composer in 2008 (*Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981): A Life Unfinished*; Harlow: Copula). Readers looking for a more compact account of Cardew's work will find Harris's book a useful adjunct to the gradually growing body of literature on the subject, and it should prove thought-provoking and useful to anyone involved in music education. As to a "legacy": even in 2014 it is perhaps too early to define exactly what that might be. Can one ever reach a final decision on such an ever-shifting subject?

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David Pilgrim and Richard Ormrod, *Elvis Costello and Thatcherism: A Psycho-Social Exploration*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. [xii] + 210 pp. ISBN 978-1-4094-4962-1.

"North American British Music" is a suitable heading under which to file the work of Elvis Costello. Born Declan MacManus in London in 1954, in 2003 Costello married the Canadian jazz musician Diana Krall. Following the work of generations of British popular musicians, his music is versed in American forms, including rock, country, bluegrass, and soul. Simon Frith once wrote (note italics) that "for British rock musicians of all kinds, the musical identity that is most pertinent—and most problematic—*is not being American*." We could say that for Costello a "special relationship" exists between the two countries, and in so doing evoke the famous phrase used in political discussion, supposedly coined by Winston Churchill, and associated especially perhaps with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

That evocation animates this interesting book, in Ashgate's Popular and Folk Music Series, which focuses on Costello's output issued during the period of Thatcher's Premiership, 1979-90, and the term "Thatcherism," which it engendered. The special relationship is the topic of one of its chapters, and there is a sensible array of other themes: "nostalgia denied" (which includes a "taboo on tenderness"); a series of the "post" formations of social theory: post-colonialism, post-feminism, and post-modernism; and finally the music industry. Concerning the last of these, one of the book's strong and consistent themes is the critical artist in a commercial setting, attentive in turn to the situation of consumption of the 1980s: the phrase "Costello was staging *Macbeth* in the midst of a foam party" is the authors' inspired invention (at p. 192). An early chapter sets out basic facts about the protagonists, derived largely from published biographies, and there is a chapter on interpretation.

The book could in fact be seen as an essay in interpretation, and here the dual authorship pays dividends: Pilgrim is Professor of Health and Social Policy at the University of Liverpool, while Ormrod is a professional musician and music teacher. They describe their attitude as a "fairly traditional position of humanistic social science" (p. 181): Marx, Weber and Bourdieu

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are listed at p. 163 as key references, and the terms “habitus” and “field,” derived from Bourdieu, are put to frequent use. In fact, quite a lot more is derived from Ormrod’s work in mental health, often buried in the footnotes: for example, an interesting comment about “the apparent predisposition of the Irish towards madness and creativity” at p. 102, a point arising from Costello’s ties to Ireland as well as to the UK and US. The footnotes and epigrams are a most learned collection, including references to writers as diverse as T. S. Eliot, Spinoza, and Proust and, in the main text at p. 101, a brief but suggestive comparison of Costello and George Bernard Shaw.

Costello and Thatcher, Costello and Shaw and, bizarrely but quite seriously at p. 122, Costello and Jack the Ripper: where do these comparisons end? Or rather, should they begin in the first place? The authors do a good job of establishing Thatcher and Thatcherism as a useful vantage-point from which to review Costello’s work even though the two were like chalk and cheese sharing, alongside the American issue, at most a “preachy tendency” (p. 41) derived from their religious roots in Methodism (Thatcher) and Catholicism (Costello). But much of the Thatcherite material found here could be compared with, for example, contemporaneous work of the English film-maker Mike Leigh, or, occasionally mentioned, the 1982 BBC television drama *The Boys from the Blackstuff*, written by Alan Bleasdale. At some point, the “psycho-social exploration” has to meld into musical specificity, and here dual expertise hinders as well as helps.

I mention Leigh and Bleasdale, for the authors’ view of Thatcher derives from the liberal left and, without necessarily reaching the lyrical heights of the poet Philip Larkin (“Oh I adore Mrs Thatcher,” “What a superb creature she is, right and beautiful”), I believe there is at least a case for approaching Thatcherism now from a balanced perspective. At p. 65, there is the comment that “legendary moments for the left in the 20th-century were largely about heroic disappointment,” which doggedly but typically avoids the liberal-left’s heroic achievements: the National Health Service, the defeat of fascism, civil rights legislation, the Good Friday Agreement, a minimum wage, and yes, a female Prime Minister and eventually and for example, a female German Chancellor and African-American President of the US. Not everything Thatcher did was bad, though it seemed so to me at the time: for example, obsessively frugal, she wouldn’t have been caught with her hands in the till as so many since have been, and a policy like the “right to buy” a council house (rented public housing) seems to have become accepted.

The political stance reasonably affects the authors’ view of the Costello oeuvre, even during this circumscribed period. Their four major case studies are single tracks, culled from a collection of ten or so albums, so criteria for selection are key. Three are concerned immediately with politics: “Tramp the Dirt Down” (1989: a vision of Thatcher buried in a grave), “Shipbuilding” (1983, which Costello wrote with Clive Langer), and “Peace in Our Time” (1984), with a final and dreadful track on domestic violence— which is not to say it is

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expressive of Costello—"Battered Old Bird" (1986).

Do the authors actually like pop music?, one wonders from this expressive sentence: "As for 'disco' and 'glam rock' these were confections that demonstrated the triumph of form over content" (p. 140). Good and bad in both, one would assume, but you have to be suspicious of people writing about pop music, however critically, who are ready to regard two whole genres as "confections." Another expressive word is their occasional reference to tracks or songs as "offerings," a term that sounded to me like BBC Radio Three in the 1970s, and too reminiscent of the word's religious roots. "Jokiness" is found at p. 168, but this sceptical word masks a real feature of Costello: wit. To choose "Battered Old Bird" without allowing, for example, "God's Comic"—with its fine joke at the expense of Andrew Lloyd Webber—is to skew the rich pageant of Costello's work.

The authors' music-theory training appears not to be as current or authoritative as their grounding in the social sciences, with a view of harmony in particular that has yet to pass through the attention to voice-leading presented over many years in theory textbooks. "Shipbuilding" takes eight pages, in which chord inversions are labelled a, b, and c, in the manner of publications from the (British) Associated Board, while the verse alone modulates six times in twelve bars, "arguably" (p. 89). In fact, the song doesn't modulate at all, but progresses from tonic to dominant through expressive tonic-minor mixture with one or two secondary dominants. "Peace in Our Time," in turn, is a simple song that does begin with a brief modulation: taking nine pages in all, their analysis at pp. 111-12 is plodding in the extreme, and examples 5.2 and 5.3 include terrifying errors: a C natural over an A7 chord and, replete with accidental, F natural over B minor. Again modulation is over-cooked: "for a brief moment we seem to be wholly in the key of B minor" (p. 112). Finally, far too much is made of a small connecting passage in "Alison" at pp. 49-50.

Their control of the emergent Costello literature also leaves much to be desired: David Brackett's still-impressive and ground-breaking 1995 chapter on "Pills and Soap"—a track right in their heartland!—covers many of their themes including accurate and pertinent musical analysis; Franklin Bruno's excellent 2005 book on *Armed Forces* prefigures many of their political themes; and Larry David Smith's 2004 study of Costello alongside Joni Mitchell is another notable *lacuna*. My own 2007 book on Costello is frequently referred to and it is for the interested reader to gauge whether this study represents it fully or accurately. I will say that their brief discussion of voice is amplified considerably at pp. 74-93 of my book, which provides considerable material to counter their bald claim that "Costello's voice is technically limited" (p. 129). Also, at p. 194, Costello's "father was technically a much better singer" is given without support, unlike the discussion of Ross MacManus's voice at my p. 80.

Presentation is of a good standard, although far too many bibliographic references appear without precise page numbers for my taste, and I see that they follow me in misspelling René

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Boomkens as Bookmens throughout. Recognising the error to my horror, I immediately wrote Professor Boomkens fifty apologetic lines, like Bart at the start of *The Simpsons*, and trust they will do so too.

A telling extension of this book's stance is arguably found in none other than Elvis Costello, who moved from this "Thatcher" period into a distinctly diverse range of musical projects, allowed himself an irenic tone (notably on *North*, 2003), and learned to read music such that he was eventually able to compose an orchestral score. Whether all of that can usefully be read alongside Prime Minister Blair, Taoiseach Aherne, or President Bush is for another day, but doing so will allow us to consider again in retrospect whether this book starts from a sustainable premise.

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