Textes et contextes
ISSN : 1961-991X
: Université Bourgogne Europe

19-1 | 2024
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Article publié le 15 juillet 2024.

James Strowman

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James Strowman, « “Strange Meeting”: Representing Traumatic Memory in Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem* (1962) and Derek Jarman’s Film Adaptation (1989) », *Textes et contextes* [], 19-1 | 2024, publié le 15 juillet 2024 et consulté le 26 mai 2026. Droits d'auteur : Le texte seul, hors citations, est utilisable sous Licence CC BY 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). Les autres éléments (illustrations, fichiers annexes importés) sont susceptibles d’être soumis à des autorisations d’usage spécifiques.. URL : http://preo.ube.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=4748

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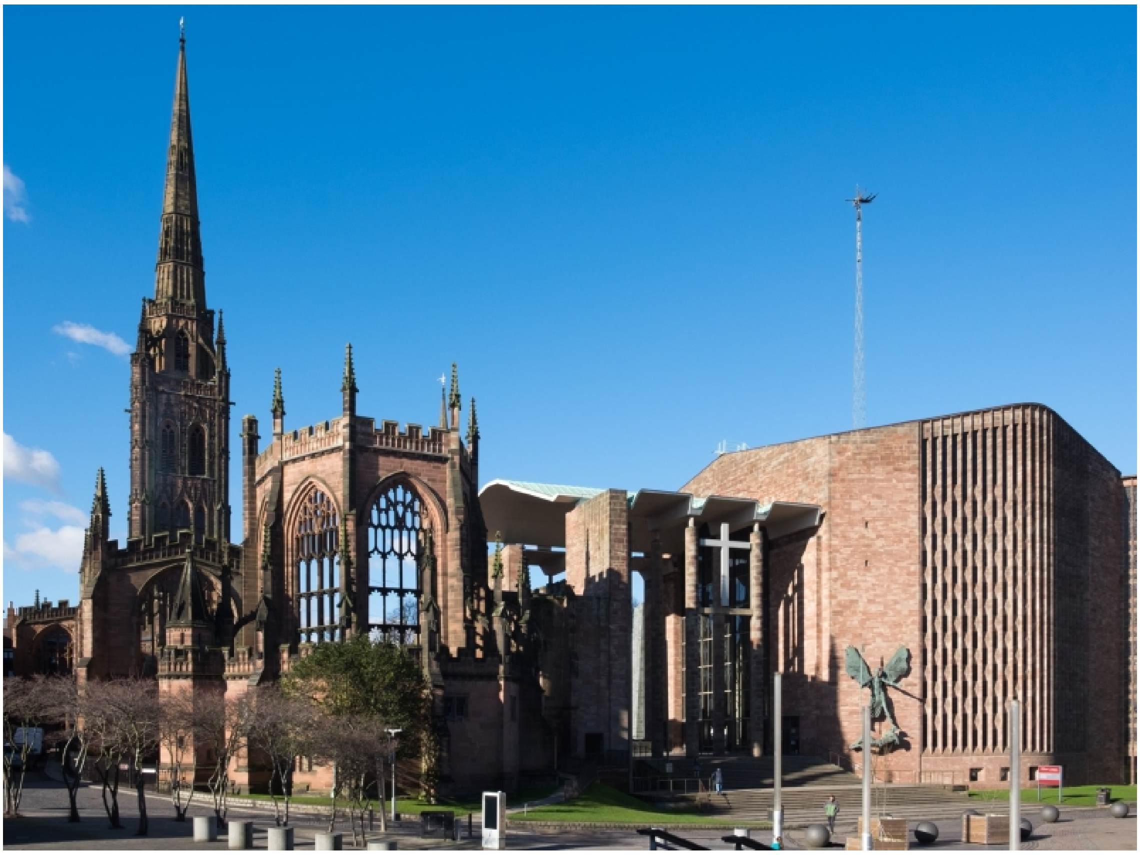
1. The Requiem between Tradition and Subversion
2. Representing and Remediating Traumatic Memory: The Interplay of Poetry, Music and Film
3. Letting the Unresolved Rest: Britten’s and Jarman’s “(An)aesthetics of Shock”

1 Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*, Op. 66 (1962) was first performed for the consecration of Coventry Cathedral, newly reconstructed after the original fourteenth-century building had been destroyed in a bombing raid during the Second World War. The composition resulted from a commission awarded by the Coventry Arts Committee in 1958 and was conceived with this commemorative event in mind. The *War Requiem* is thus a sort of public monument bearing the trace of the cultural trauma of the Second World War. It is dedicated to the

composer's friends Roger Burney, Piers Dunkerley, David Gill, and Michael Halliday, all of whom were killed in action, except Dunkerley, who had taken part in the 1944 Normandy landings and committed suicide in 1959.[1] Basil Spence's reconstruction of Coventry Cathedral is striking for the way in which it preserves the former cathedral's ruined shell alongside the modern design [See Illustration 1].

Illustration 1. Basil Spence's reconstruction of Coventry Cathedral (1962).



2 The cathedral therefore serves as a site of memory for the fateful night of 14 November 1940, during which 500 Luftwaffe bombers destroyed over 4000 homes in Coventry and killed 568 people, thereby reflecting the etymology of the word "monument," which derives from the Latin *monere*, meaning to "exhort" or "remind."[2] The cathedral's hybridity conflating the old and the new finds its formal equivalent in the hybrid structure of the *War Requiem*, which comprises a standard liturgical setting of the Requiem Mass in Latin and poems from Wilfred Owen's secular twentieth-century verse. As Owen wrote his poems in response to his own experiences of the

First World War, their inclusion in the *War Requiem* superimposes the two world wars, thus recalling Walter Benjamin's famous conception of the "angel of history," prompted by Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* (1920), which reads the past as "one single catastrophe that piles wreckage upon wreckage" in the present (Benjamin 1955: 249).

3 As Mervyn Cooke observes, Britten's *War Requiem* was a phenomenal success: critics largely hailed the work as a masterpiece, its pacifist message was well received in Britain and abroad, and the 1963 Decca recording featuring Britten conducting sold nearly a quarter of a million copies in just five months (Cooke 1996: 78-83). However, like Spence's reconstruction of Coventry Cathedral, Britten's Requiem also had a somewhat mixed reception, albeit for quite different reasons. Critics such as Peter Schaffer interpreted the juxtaposition of Owen's secular verse with the Latin liturgy as suggesting "war is blasphemy" and thereby overlooked Britten's disillusionment with Christianity (Schaffer 1962). Moreover, Edward Rothstein criticised the work's ending (a setting of Owen's poem "Strange Meeting") for evoking an "easily won" reconciliation between two enemies (Rothstein 1992). For Cooke, however, these objections demonstrate a total "lack of receptivity to the work's complex ironies" (Cooke 1996: 87-88). Michael Kennedy also suggests that "an unidentified revulsion from, or fear of, the sexual undertones in the work may account for its being disliked by some listeners," especially as the theme of military engagement is typically associated with a particular type of masculinity (Kennedy 1986: 86). As Cooke observes, "the *War Requiem* may ultimately be concerned with the […] intense dichotomy between private anxiety and public responsibility," and some of the criticism against the work undoubtedly stemmed from prejudices regarding Britten's pacifist beliefs (Cooke 1996: 88).[3] This dichotomy also reflects the composer's choice to use Owen's poetry as an intertext within the Requiem setting in order to create a tension between official commemoration (particularly given the project was a commission) and the potency of trauma as a personal experience.

4 The *War Requiem*'s intermedial structure and its subversive political subtext are further enhanced in Derek Jarman's eponymous film (1989). Jarman uses the original Decca recording of Britten's *War Requiem* for the film's soundtrack, without making any interruptions or additional sound effects (as per the request of the Britten-Pears

Foundation). While the film candidly represents the lives lost on the battlefield, its non-linear and fragmented narrative retelling also exposes the aesthetic limits of representing trauma and mediates a critical reflection on the irrationality of military conflict. Apart from Britten's Requiem, Jarman's intermedial structure ostensibly revisits Humphrey Jennings' propaganda short film *Words for Battle* (1941), which likewise experimentally conflates the mediums of poetry and film. As Max Carpenter remarks, Jarman encountered the work of Jennings as a student; however, Jarman's anti-war film "preoccupied by the psychological strife of late-twentieth-century queer life" positions itself in counterpoint with Jennings' "optimistic patriotism" and use of literary intertexts to generate support for Britain's war effort (Carpenter 2019).[4] Jarman wrote and filmed the *War Requiem* in the context of the AIDS pandemic—having been diagnosed himself as HIV positive on 22 December 1986.[5] The encounter with death evoked in Britten's and Owen's work thus had an especially strong significance for Jarman, and helps to explain why he undermines traditional strategies of official commemoration in favour of an emphasis on the searing personal testimony of Owen's work. Furthermore, the late 1980s was a time when scholarship on Owen began to take a significant turn: on 16 January 1987, Jonathan Cutbill published an article in *The New Statesman* entitled "The Truth Untold" which critically challenged the suppression of Owen's homosexual experiences in academic discourse. This cultural climate makes Jarman's film a virulent critique that opposes official authority and avant-garde art in its representation and commemoration of traumatic memory. Jarman also emphasises the transgenerational aspect of trauma integral to Britten's Requiem, most notably by casting Lawrence Olivier as a war veteran struggling with the enduring consequences of his traumatic experiences during the war.[6] Olivier had not only starred in the 1944 film adaptation of *Henry* V, a landmark in wartime propaganda, but had also provided the voiceover in *Words for Battle*, reciting passages from famous English literary works and speeches to accompany documentary sequences of rural and urban Britain at war. In Jarman's film, however, Olivier plays an altogether different role, dismantling the narrative of combatant masculinity and war heroes as essential to British culture.

5 From the perspective of trauma studies, this article explores how Britten’s *War Requiem* and Jarman’s cinematographic adaptation employ subversive structuring devices to mediate the cultural trauma of the Second World War in ways that explicitly reflect the critical limit of its representation. Their approaches to their respective mediums seek to capture the paradoxically inaccessible character of traumatic memory, and thereby evoke a critical tension between official and personal memory regarding the traumatic past. Much existing scholarship on trauma is indebted to Pierre Janet’s late-nineteenth-century concept of “dissociation” in how it describes, as Frank Ankersmit puts it, the way “trauma effects a *dissociation* of a traumatically experienced reality and the subject of the traumatic experience” (Ankersmit 2002: 77; emphasis his own). As Charlotte Delbo observed, her own experience of trauma at Auschwitz remained “enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolate[d] it from [her] present self” (Delbo 1990: 2). This points to the central paradox in traumatic memory, which “gives us a past that is neither forgotten nor remembered” as “[t]rauma occurs because of the subject’s incapacity to absorb the traumatic experience within the whole of [their] life-story and that makes [them] traumatically aware of a reality hiding itself from [them]” (Ankersmit 2002: 77). From this perspective, Ankersmit suggests, the unique experience of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) delivers “insistent reenactments of the past [that] do not simply serve as testimony to an event, but may also […] bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred” (77). Thus, Ankersmit claims that “[t]he traumatic past is an abstract past,” a negating memory which is resistant to mediating narrative structures (76).

6 In recent years, scholars such as Ankersmit and Kiene Brillenburg Wurth have drawn comparisons between trauma and the eighteenth-century notions of the sublime as conceived by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. A significant part of this article examines Britten’s and Jarman’s respective *War Requiems* through the lens of some of these common features between the two: for example, Ankersmit suggests that the Kantian “dynamical sublime” constitutes an encounter with “a reality that has retained all of its radical alienness,” which clearly echoes the negating aspect of traumatic memory (Ankersmit 2002: 77). Wurth argues that the dynamical sublime be-

longs to an "aesthetics of traumatic shock" and she thereby establishes conceptual analogues with traumatic "flashbacks" and states of psychological "hyperarousal" (Wurth 2009: 161). As Wurth contends, Kant's dynamical sublime is widely considered to have taken the final step in "subjectivizing the sublime," because it reads the external stimuli acting on fears already internalised by the subject, who, through processes of dissociation, emerges with a feeling of cathartic relief and positive transformation (Wurth 2009: 3). While this brings into focus the transcendental quality of Burke's "existential sublime," it also points to its paradoxical nature, which Burke evocatively described as a feeling of "tranquillity tinged with terror" (Burke 1990: 123). Burke suggests that this paradox captures the experience of the sublime as it alludes to the subject's capacity to (at least partially) dissociate themselves from the "unreal" nature of the ontological threat.

7 The first part of this article considers the structural dissociation Britten creates in juxtaposing the traditional Requiem setting with Owen's secular poetry. The *War Requiem* epitomises Britten's attempt to dramatize the Requiem form, which is notably apparent in his polyphonic arrangement of the work's component parts that introduces further degrees of dissociation and subverts the Requiem as a symbol of collective bereavement. I argue that the composer's strategies of subversion stem from his own disenchantment with Christianity, a sentiment he draws from Owen's verse, and which Jarman also uses in an altogether different context (the AIDS crisis and Thatcherism) in his film adaptation.[7] My attention then turns to the technical features of the Requiem and the film that symbolise a jarring sense of dissociation, notably Britten's provocative use of the tritone interval (historically known as the *diabolus in musica*) and Jarman's intentional dislocation between the image track and the sound track. Both devises create powerful sonic and visual dissonances, which, especially in Jarman's case, appear to self-reflexively point to the irreconcilable gap in trauma and its aesthetic remediation. The final part of this article examines a climactic moment towards the end of the *War Requiem* and its cinematic realization. I contend that both composer and filmmaker use unexpected and shocking musical and cinematic techniques to simulate the (re-)experience of trauma through the sublime, creating aesthetic imitations of traumatic flashbacks and states of hyperarousal. In each *War Requiem*, the series of

apocalyptic climaxes appear to fundamentally derail the trajectory of each respective medium. Rather than ending victoriously through a teleological narrative, as in Beethoven’s “heroic style,” this ultimately leads to a “Strange Meeting” that calls into question heroic masculinity while gesturing towards the uncanny and homoerotic character of warfare evoked in Owen’s poetry.

1. The Requiem between Tradition and Subversion

8 The Requiem Mass, also known as the Mass for the dead (*Missa pro defunctis*), comprises a liturgical text, from which its name derives: the first part of the text, the Introit, begins with “Requiem æternam dona eis Domine” (“Give them eternal rest, O Lord”). The Requiem is used by the Catholic Church in the Eucharistic funeral service offered for the souls of the dead. Musical settings of the liturgical text have a diverse history. While Renaissance composers wrote Requiems to be performed *a cappella*, from around 1600 onwards composers began to use instruments to accompany the choir and the vocal soloists. This resulted in larger and more expansive Requiem settings, and by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries composers were writing Requiems as dramatic concert pieces (well-known examples include François Joseph Gossec’s *Grande Messe des Morts*, 1760; Mozart’s Requiem in D minor, 1791; and Giuseppe Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem*, 1874). Since the early Renaissance works, composers have treated the liturgical text with varying degrees of liberty, for instance, by omitting sections entirely, dividing a section over several movements, or fusing two sections into a single movement. An especially original example is Johannes Brahms’ A *German Requiem, to Words of the Holy Scriptures*, Op. 45 (*Ein deutsches Requiem, nach Worten der heiligen Schrift*, 1868). Brahms’ Requiem is non-liturgical as it is not based on the traditional text in Latin, but is nonetheless a sacred setting of passages drawn from the Luther Bible.

9 Britten’s strikingly subversive idea to set the Latin Requiem text in juxtaposition with Owen’s secular poetry makes the *War Requiem* a unique reworking of the genre—full of pity, pathos, and bitter irony. Like the architect of the reconstructed Coventry Cathedral, Britten thus places seemingly irreconcilable elements side by side, forming

the complex, contradictory whole considered by the composer as the most apt formal structure to represent war trauma. The composition opened the way for other twentieth- and twenty-first-century composers, such as Krzysztof Penderecki, whose *Dies iræ* (1967) includes a variety of excerpts taken from the *Book of Psalms*, poems by Wladyslaw Broniewski, Louis Aragon, and Paul Valéry, as well as Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. Karl Jenkins' *Requiem* (2005) is also an interesting example that interweaves secular Japanese haikus throughout the Mass and uses non-Western instrumentation, like the *shakuhachi* (an ancient Japanese wind instrument) and the *daiko* (a Japanese drum). As Cooke underlines, the *War Requiem* represents Britten's endeavour to exploit the full range of the genre's "dramatic possibilities" (Cooke 1996: 49). The six-movement work includes a symphony orchestra, a mixed choir, and three vocal soloists (soprano, tenor, and baritone). Britten assigns specific roles to the tenor (Owen) and baritone (Unknown Soldier); however, in accordance with the *War Requiem*'s oratorio character, they are instructed to perform without props or costumes. The Requiem can conversely be described as operatic in style bearing in mind the historical themes emerging from Owen's poetry, which contrast with the sacred subjects typically found in oratorios.[8] Its dramatic focus is heightened further by the addition of a boys' chorus, a twelve-piece chamber ensemble, and an organ. Overall this creates three distinct groups of musicians, whereby the soloists and chamber orchestra occupy the foreground, the large orchestra and mixed choir take the middle ground, and the organ and boys' choir remain in the background. As Kennedy suggests, "this physical placement helps to reinforce the dramatic and emotional aspects of the work, in that the boys' choir is almost totally depersonalized as if in some distant mystical realm; the soprano, chorus and orchestra 'mourn humanity,' and the male soloists and chamber orchestra become the 'voices of the victims'" (Kennedy 1981: 223-224). Moreover, as Adrian Poole observes, Britten's structural idea of using the mixed choir, the boys' choir, and the soprano to sing the words of the liturgy, and the tenor and baritone to sing Owen's poetry settings "bears comparison with the opposition in ancient tragic drama, at once antagonism and collaboration, between the choral lyrics and the intervening 'episodes' or scenes, spoken by the individual actors" (Poole 2019: 173).

10 The original Decca recording (1963), featuring Peter Pears (Owen), Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (Unknown Soldier), and Galina Vishnevskaya, includes a complete performance of the *War Requiem* as well as a recording of the work in rehearsal with the composer conducting. This extra feature gives special insight into how Britten conceived the work in performance and his comments during rehearsals correlate with Kennedy’s remarks. For example, on the closing page of the “Libera me” (“Deliver me”), Britten instructs the boys’ choir to sing more quietly and “imagine [themselves] in heaven, a long way away from here” (Britten 1963).[9] While this contributes to the “depersonalized” character of the boys’ choir, the idea that the boys’ singing emanates from “some distant mystical realm” such as heaven strongly evokes the sublime’s transcendental quality. The ethereal quality of the boys’ high-pitched and hushed voices is often given greater emphasis in performance practice by placing the boys’ choir quite literally at a remove from the other ensembles.[10] This displacement crucially breaks the image of the standard Requiem Mass, in which the choir is typically a heterogeneous, yet physically unified ensemble symbolizing the collective bereavement and mourning of the dead. The remoteness of the boys’ choir also stirs the impression that the qualities of innocence and peace that the boys’ voices incarnate are far-removed from the “voices of the victims” performed by the soloists. This polyphonic rearrangement of the Requiem thus critically exposes the binding forces holding the *War Requiem* together by displacing its component parts to fulfil the work’s programmatic objectives.

11 Britten’s widely documented pacifist stance is a major feature of the *War Requiem*’s subversive strategies.[11] Returning to England from the United States in 1942, the composer registered as a conscientious objector and gained exemption from combative military service (although he remained liable to be called up for non-combative work). As part of his statement to the Local Tribunal for the Registration of Conscientious Objectors, Britten contended that “the fascist attitude to life can only be overcome by passive resistance” (Cooke 1996: 15). Conversely, Owen enlisted in the Artists’ Rifles Officers’ Training Corps in 1915, and became second lieutenant in the Manchester Regiment by the following year. However, despite his military engagement, Owen’s poetry remains a testament to his pacifism because, unlike other war poets, such as Rupert Brooke, Owen did not glorify

warfare. Rather, he showed it to be ideologically flawed and a failure of Christianity. As C. Day Lewis argues in his introduction to *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen* (1963), Owen grew throughout his experiences in action, and he “went back to the front line [in 1918] because he felt that there he would be in a stronger position to voice his protest against the war” (Owen 1963: 23). In a letter to Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (16 February 1961), Britten thus states that he chose Owen’s “magnificent poems, full of the hate of destruction” because he wanted them to be “a kind of commentary on the Mass” (Britten 2010: 313). As Sarah Montin observes, moreover, Owen’s poetry “emphasize[s] the strangeness of war, lived as an experience of absolute difference” (Montin 105).[12] The concept of dissociation is therefore firmly embedded within Owen’s verse itself. However, as Roland Wymer notes, Owen also certainly “experienced the exultation of battle” (Wymer 2005: 127). In a letter to his mother (4 October 1918), the poet-combatant describes the military action for which he won the Military Cross, writing: “I lost all my earthly faculties, and fought like an angel” (Owen 1985: 351).[13] Interestingly, Owen’s description of combat is full of otherworldly allusions. Britten seems therefore to have been drawn to his poetry not only because it echoes the composer’s disillusionment with religious institutions and his values as a conscientious objector (the differences in the ideological stakes between the two world wars notwithstanding), but also because it vividly captures the ethereal character of traumatic experience, a feature that I explore in greater depth in my analysis of Britten’s setting of Owen’s poem “Strange Meeting” in the final part of this article.

12 Although Jarman has written in detail about his “revulsion for war,” the filmmaker’s convictions were, it appears, closer to Owen’s than to Britten’s (Jarman 1990: 9). As Wymer observes, Jarman had previously claimed: “without men like my father the war would not have been won!” (Jarman 1987: 107). However, like Owen and Britten, Jarman was determined to portray the “pity of war,” and this is where his place within a “‘great tradition’ of homosexual artists” makes his film intensely personal and collective (Wymer 2005: 124). For example, Owen and Jarman were both drawn to the suffering of “Christ figures, who represent the ‘greater love’ in which individual identities (including distinctions of gender) start to dissolve;” yet their identification with Christ was offset given that it “coexisted with a profound aliena-

tion from the moralizing of the organized Church and its representatives" (125). Owen's poetry dreams of a revived Christianity that restores the true Christian message by overturning the corruption of the Church. It thus vehemently condemns warfare and nations that propagate "The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori" (Owen 1963: 55). To promote the values of peace and solidarity, the poet argues that society must look beyond the Church and its priests "flesh-marked by the Beast" (an allusion to the mark of the Beast in the Book of Revelation 13:16), which have corrupted the teachings of Christ to justify countless atrocities over centuries (Owen 1963: 82). As Wymer remarks, Owen's stance towards the Church would have undoubtedly "resonated with Jarman who had been appalled by the response of the religious Right to the AIDS crisis" (Wymer 2005: 125). For Jarman, the AIDS crisis had created a devastating war-like atmosphere for the gay community, as he comments: "[s]o many friends dead or dying. […] Surely even the Great War brought no more loss into one life in just twelve months, and all this as we made love not war" (Jarman 1992b: 143). Towards the end of his screenplay for *War Requiem*, the filmmaker writes: "In my heart, I dedicate my film of the *War Requiem* to all those cast out, like myself, from Christendom. To my friends who are dying in a moral climate created by a church with no compassion" (Jarman 1990: 35). However, in a move that Wymer describes as bearing "moral and aesthetic tact," Jarman gives this dedication no prominence in his film so as to avoid explicitly equating the two world wars with the AIDS crisis and to leave the film's symbolism open to the viewer's interpretation (Wymer 2005: 125).

13 Britten's structural subversion of the Requiem Mass through his juxtaposition of its liturgical text via Owen's secular poetry constitutes an especially critical "commentary" of the religious symbolism of the Requiem, which dramatically transforms the sacred setting into an uncanny realisation of itself. The *War Requiem*'s degree of structural dislocation resonates with the dramatic themes running throughout the work, which represent the devastating effects of war that deform and dismantle the familiar, whereby not even the absolutism of religious faith emerges unscathed. This chimes especially with the idea of traumatic dissociation, in which the disjuncture found in the work's structural disposition and settings of Owen's poetry evokes the "radical alienness" of traumatic memory and its irreconcilability.

The contrasted scales between the chamber orchestra and full orchestra, the choirs and the soloists, underpin Britten’s desire to explore the tension between personal memory and official, collective commemoration. This contrast also reflects how the critical emphasis of the artwork’s relation to the social totality is manifest through Britten’s effective use of irony as a structuring device to evoke traumatic dissociation, which stems from the way the isolated individual relates to the community—a recurrent theme in his work that clearly appealed to Jarman.

2. Representing and Remediating Traumatic Memory: The Interplay of Poetry, Music and Film

14 As Wymer remarks, “in using the traditional form of the Requiem Mass, Britten was fulfilling the requirements of a public act of remembrance and reconciliation” (Wymer 2005: 122). However, by interspersing the Latin liturgy with Owen’s secular war poems, the composer was not only creating a highly unusual collage structure out of the literary intertexts, but also “making a more personal and, indeed, angry statement of his pacifist beliefs” (123). Jarman’s *War Requiem* certainly capitalizes on these particular features of Britten’s composition, in ways which also simulate the experience of trauma through the sublime. Jarman categorically avoids recounting using the same narrative strategies as Hollywood films treating traumatic subjects, such as *Schindler’s List* (1993) or *The Pianist* (2002), in which a teleological structure ends with an uplifting resolution. The film begins with a prologue in which a nurse (Tilda Swinton) wheels a war veteran (Laurence Olivier) out of hospital and down a path in a wheelchair.[14] As Nicole Cloarec observes, “[f]rom the onset, the film is placed under the two notions of commemoration, as the old soldier displays his medals, and memory, when he shows the nurse the old photograph of a war nurse he has kept in his pocket near a poppy” (Cloarec 2017: 356). These objects trigger multiple flashback sequences comprising his traumatic memories of warfare. His scattered recollections constitute the remainder of the film, which Jarman develops into an experimental biopic of Owen’s enlistment and experi-

ences of the First World War.[15] One of the most striking features of the film is that the dialogue between characters is entirely muted, giving priority to the extra-diegetic soundtrack and limiting the viewer to impressions of each character's interiority that are reminiscent of the conventions of silent film. Olivier's intertextual voice (recalling his roles in *Words for Battle* and *Henry V*) not only evokes the transgenerational character of trauma and Jarman's deconstruction of combatant masculinity, but also alludes to the speechlessness traumatised victims experience in trying to express their trauma given that his voice is silenced after the film's prologue.[16] Moreover, as Jim Ellis comments, the dislocation between the image track and the sound track "immediately pushes the film away from realism" (Ellis 2009: 150). This explicitly points to how Jarman's representation of traumatic memory is mediated through cinematic artifice, whereby it is possible to hear Olivier's disembodied voice in conjunction with a series of disconnected images pertaining to different temporalities. It also reflects Jarman's "detached skepticism of the cinematic medium," which the filmmaker shared with Jennings (Carpenter 2019). The gap essentially exposes the viewer to the limits of reconciliation with the past, whereby the official commemorative feature of the musical work, further ironically echoed in the film, is no guarantee of resolution in the present. This is conveyed to disturbing effect later in the film, during the "Dies iræ" ("The Day of Wrath"), the *War Requiem*'s second movement, whereby Jarman superimposes images of a mixed choir singing the Requiem over monochrome newsreels depicting battle scenes from the First World War [See Illustration 2].

Illustration 2. Superimposition of choir and First World War newsreel.

© Derek Jarman, *War Requiem* (1989).

15 The fact that the choir is asynchronous with the Decca recording of Britten’s composition appears to satirise the ritualised singing of the Requiem by turning the singers’ impassioned facial expressions, intermittently caught in close-up shots, into hollow expressions disconnected from the sacred meaning of the words.

16 While Olivier and Swinton are depicted as conversing during the prologue, the viewer instead hears the veteran reciting a truncated version of Owen’s poem “Strange Meeting,” which returns in the “Libera me,” the *War Requiem*’s final movement. The prologue is underscored by the persistent sound of church bells, reinforcing the links between the different temporal strata in the film, given tubular bells are a prominent feature of Britten’s score, which only begins after the prologue. While, in the prologue, the bells stir images of ecclesiastical order and sacred commemoration, in the “Requiem æternam,” the *War Requiem*’s first movement, it becomes increasingly obvious that the bells symbolize a sentiment of oppression and discord. As the movement opens, the film portrays a poignant shot of Owen’s sister or lover, standing grieving next to the poet’s corpse. This character is

also played by Swinton, thereby casting her as a symbolic, trans-historical figure. Holding Owen's helmet, she cries out in expressionistic rage, which is not heard but felt through physical gesture. What is audible is the movement's key thematic material in the strings, as the chorus joins in with staggered, dovetailed entries on the Latin words "Et lux perpetua perpetua luceat eis" ("And let perpetual light shine upon them"). At this point, Swinton makes a symbolic hand gesture—a sort of inverted two-finger salute—which she uses to shield her eyes from the "eternal light." The choir is restricted to singing exclusively Cs and F sharps throughout the first movement. At first, the bells imitate the voices' alternating between the two pitches, but from fig.2(+4), they begin to chime the two pitches in unison, explicitly forming the tritone interval, which pervades the rest of the movement.[17] The use of this interval in a Requiem Mass is particularly symbolic due to its fraught history with the Church and therefore forms another of Britten's strategies of subversion. As Heather Wiebe remarks, "[w]hile the bells had a celebratory effect in Britten's earlier work, here in the *War Requiem* they are different, relating more closely to the oppressive bells of the church in *Peter Grimes* or the horror-imbued bells of *The Turn of the Screw*" (Wiebe 2015: 220). This passage is followed by the unexpected and fleeting appearance of the boys' choir at fig.3. The choir's "Te decet hymnus" material marks a significant contrast with the preceding passage, with the boys' voices moving in perfect unison, at a spritely tempo, in a simple crotchet rhythm. Highly reminiscent of medieval plainsong, this passage feels like Britten's "deliberately ironic archaism," which creates further degrees of temporal dissociation (Cooke 1996: 57). Although the first two notes sung by the boys' choir resolve the tritone into a perfect fourth, the implied harmony is short-lived given that each ensuing melodic phrase turns out to be composed of eleven different pitches. Cooke interprets this exhaustive use of the chromatic scale as a reflection of "God's grandeur and omnipotence;" yet these highly dissonant melodies also stimulate foreboding musical imagery (61). At fig.6, the tritone returns, and by fig.7, the boys' choir chants the interval in unison with the tubular bells before disappearing again. Throughout the appearance of the boys' choir, Jarman's film displays a sequence of super-8 images, "tinged with a golden glow of nostalgia," which depict Owen's pre-war family life through Swinton's recollections (Wymer 2005: 124). Jarman thereby highlights the retrospective vantage point from which Britten was working, through which nostalgia for the past is inevitably tainted by a darker hue of knowing what is ahead, hence the return to the tritone following its momentary resolution.

17 When the chorus and large orchestra repeat the opening material, beginning at fig.7(+1), they bring back the theme of hope for Eternal Rest. This time, even more unexpectedly, Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth" interrupts the Latin liturgy at fig.9 in a gesture which "seriously undermines the stylized religious phrases of condolence and consolation" (Cooke 1996: 53). Up to this point, the rhythmically static tritone sounding in the boys' choir and the bells appeared to reflect the solemnity of mourning a painfully tragic loss. Now Britten seizes on the ironic juxtaposition of the texts by transforming the homorhythmic tritone into agitated, arppegiated tremolos in the harp. The tenor soloist (Owen) sings the set poem accompanied by the "Doomed Youth" theme in the strings, which derives from the previous thematic material and returns at a key moment in the final movement. The poem's opening lines comment on the Requiem's supplication for Eternal Rest by ironically asking "What passing bells for these who die as cattle?" and answering "Only the monstrous anger of the guns." Throughout this setting, Jarman depicts men (including Owen) being herded into a courtyard like cattle for slaughter while a parodic military training session gets under way. This leads to one of the musical work's most unsettling moments, as the soloist brings the tritonal dissonance to the fore, which is especially prominent in the melismatic alternation between C and G flat over the word "prayers," as well as in the palindromic melodic profile of the tenor's phrase "The shrill demented choirs of wailing shells," beginning and ending on C while peaking on G flat over the word "wailing."[18] Britten inflects the poem's reference to "bugles" as the horn clashes with the oboe forming augmented fourths (tritones), which quickly turns its fanfare character into a warped entrada or strangely dissonant military call to arms. The symbolism of the bugle also evokes the waking of the spirits in the biblical depiction of the Day of Judgment and the forthcoming Apocalypse, with the angels sounding their trumpets and the "voice like thunder" calling "Come!" (Revelation 6:1).[19] While this brings the commemorative feature of each work into close alignment

with Christian notions of sin and redemption, the overall effect is clearly ironic.

18 The brief “Kyrie eleison” setting, which concludes the first movement, is indicative of the amount of redemptive value Britten wished to invest in his Requiem. Significantly, the “Kyrie eleison” foreshadows the work’s ending given it resolves the tritone interval to an F major chord. As Cooke suggests, the ultimate modulation to F major is not entirely surprising because it “has been prepared in advance by its appearance during the ‘Te decet hymnus’ and as a pedal note at the end of the Owen setting (fig.15),” but its harmonic status is tenuous and certainly unusual, especially given the prevailing key of G minor (Verdi’s preferred Requiem key) and the more obvious harmonic resolution of the tritone C–F sharp being to G major or D flat major (Cooke 1996: 62). It is also unexpected because it does not manifest through a dominant chord preparation and dominant-tonic (V–I) cadence, but rather somewhat reluctantly in an achingly slow tempo, an extremely quiet *pianissississimo* dynamic marking, and, almost haphazardly, through a chromatic side-slip from F sharp major to F major. In the film, the movement closes with Owen “kneel[ing] at the altar of a village church, like Henry V before Agincourt” (Jarman 1990: 8). He is depicted reading an anthology of Keats’ poetical works which he then places on the steps of the alter in a gesture that “sacramentalize[s] the secular” (Gomez 1996: 95). This is immediately followed by a close-up shot of two pairs of hands in the act of breaking bread to celebrate the Eucharist and honor the sacrifice of Christ. The contrast between these images clearly reflects the opposition between the sacred and the secular manifest in Britten’s work, while also appearing to visually symbolize the sense of irresolution in the movement’s cadential closure.

3. Letting the Unresolved Rest: Britten’s and Jarman’s “(An)aesthetics of Shock”

19 In the “Agnus Dei” (“Lamb of God”), the fifth movement of the *War Requiem*, Britten sets Owen’s poem “At a Calvary near the Ancre,” which compares the battlefields of the First World War to Golgotha

(or "place of the skull" from the Latin *Calvariae locus*), the site where, according to the canonical gospels, Jesus was crucified. Priests, standing for the corruption of the Church, and described as "flesh-marked by the Beast," are equated with the authorities responsible for the trial of Jesus and the Crucifixion (Owen 1963: 82). At the beginning of the "Libera me," Jarman underscores the futile human sacrifice that the carnage of war constitutes through a series of close-up images of mass graves.[20] As Jarman remarks, whereas "[n]ational propagandas manipulate film to disguise the carnage," *War Requiem* aims to critically expose it (Jarman 1990: 11). The "Libera me" begins as a slow, tentative funeral march, with the "Doomed Youth" theme outlined in the percussion "as a mere rhythmic skeleton" (Cooke 1996: 73). Its sense of rudimentary form anticipates the degree of brokenness that will emerge following the movement's emphatic climax at fig.116, where a thunderous and sustained orchestral chord, imitating an explosion, implodes the work's binding forces. Everything is building up to this climatic moment, as the tempo quickens through a progressive *accelerando*, and the uncanny rhythmical outline of the theme acquires pitches, starting in the double bass and ascending through the orchestra. This creates the impression of gaining gradual access to deeply buried traumatic memory. The degree of depth is also evoked by the way the "Doomed Youth" theme resurfaces here after several movements, bringing along with it the sonic memories of "the monstrous anger of the guns," "the shrill, demented choirs," and "the bugles calling them [the soldiers] from sad shires." The theme becomes increasingly animated, matching the same tempo at which it was first introduced in the "Requiem æternam" by fig.105, and then eclipsing it thereafter. This epitomizes Wiebe's claim that "its cumulative effect is 'sensory overload,' as the sounds of violence that have run through the *War Requiem* are allowed to entirely overwhelm the listener," evoking the state of hyperarousal a subject experiences at the onset of (re-)experiencing trauma (Wiebe 2015: 217). Several percussive attempts are made to thwart the momentum of the frenzied musical material, which are performed by the whip, the Chinese block, and the snare drum, at fig.105(+6), fig.105(+12), and fig.107. As these attempts ultimately fail to halt the "Doomed Youth" theme, what began as a funeral march increasingly becomes a frantic, rhythmically irregular march. At fig.108, the soprano begins to "mourn humanity" through a succession of explosive climaxes beginning at fig.110 and ending resoundingly at fig.116. These orchestral implosions are like a series of progressive ruptures, epitomized by the symbol crashes and the sustained minim-length suspense on an A flat octave before the final eruption over the G minor chord at fig.116, which emphatically derails the movement’s trajectory.

20 Jarman’s film matches the impression of hyperarousal elicited through the musical imagery, by speeding up the documentary footage and using special effects (colour filters and superimpositions) which turn what is supposed to be an unmediated documentary vision of war into imagery that resembles abstract painting (Cloarec 2017: 359).[21] Like the canvases of Abstract Expressionism, this technique highlights the materiality and “objectness” of the artwork, which creates a striking effect because the images simultaneously bring the viewer into closer proximity with the material components of warfare, as when the special effects resemble shrapnel explosions or infernal fires, while again explicitly pointing to the degree of artifice involved in the film’s mediation of traumatic memory. As the movement begins, Jarman’s *War Requiem* proceeds through a montage, crosscutting newsreel images of the First World War with colour footage, much of it shocking, from recent wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and the Falklands. While this accumulative effect echoes Britten’s own approach to superposing the two world wars, it also ironizes on the idea that the Great War was “the war to end all wars”.[22] When the climactic passage commences at fig.105(+6), Jarman presents images which conflate men and boys, child’s play and war, fact and fiction, thereby forcing the viewer to bear witness to the absurdity underlying the disturbing *veritas* of war. Following this, a pyrotechnical display ensues through a sequence of images (flamethrower, lightning bolt, and atomic bomb) forming a cataclysmic visual spectacle and vividly underlining the interconnectedness of energy, light, and destruction, and also, creation, such as through the medium of film. Such mixing of negative and positive affect in the experience of the sublime recalls Derrida’s notion of *mélange*, which signifies “madness” when the sites for pleasure and displeasure are (con)fused in such ways (Derrida 1987: 290). At times, Jarman distorts the footage through double exposure to such an extent that it transforms into shockingly formless images, whereby the blurring effect represents total dissociation. Moreover, the formlessness of the se-

quence might be interpreted as performing a similar gesture to approaches by artists of *Abstraction lyrique*, such as Georges Mathieu, Pierre Soulages, and Hans Hartung, who used the absence of a premeditated structure as part of their uncompromising attempts to reclaim the artwork’s autonomy. In other words, Jarman maintains the film’s critical agency by using experimental techniques to convey a jarring narrative based on an “(an)aesthetics of shock,” which sharply contrasts with both the teleological narrativizing strategies of the aforementioned Hollywood films and the smooth ideological narratives of warring nations used to justify mass destruction (Wurth 2002: 255). The jolting character of these sequences indeed reflect Jarman’s own comments about the film:

> the *War Requiem* I heard in 1963 seemed shockingly arbitrary. I hope that my film has a similar feeling of discomfort. Perfectly crafted films exclude the chance encounter that stops you in your tracks. I like rough edges […], sending ripples through the work. Like a stone cast in a silent pond. […] I throw this film into the water, lest we forget. (Jarman 1990: 47)

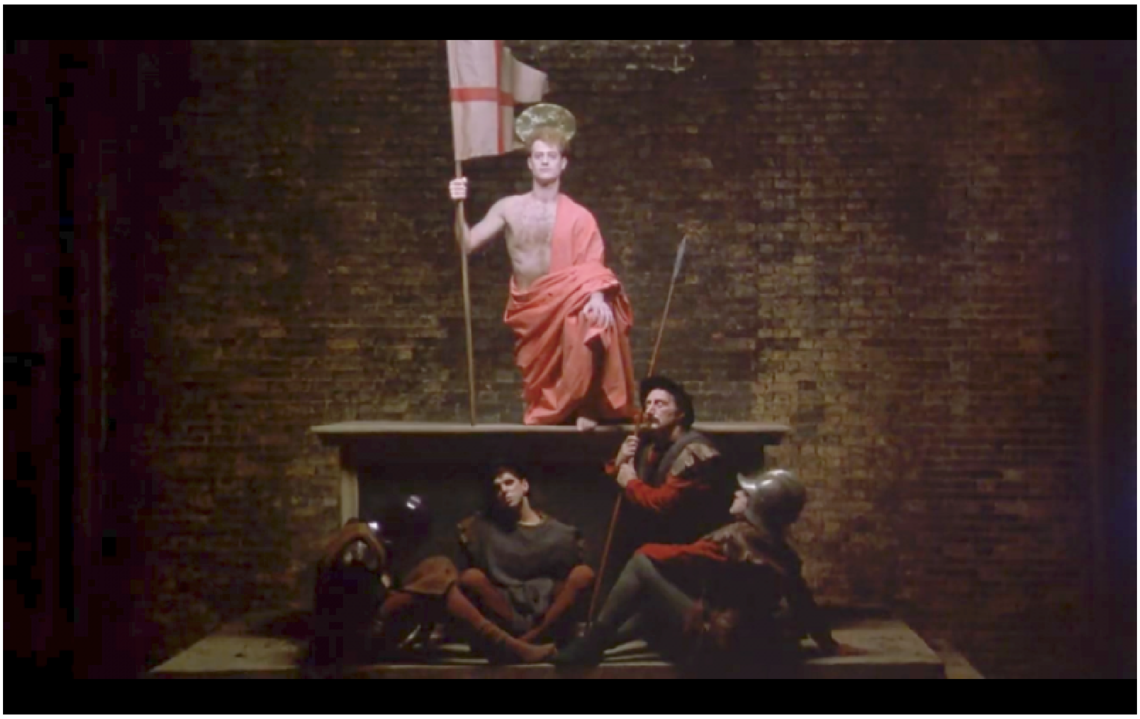
21 By making the explosion of the atomic bomb coincide with the culminating climactic gesture at fig.116, Jarman emphatically underscores this moment as a point of no return in the work’s dramatic structure while pointing to the “negative image that totality has become” (Buhler 1996: 143). The viewer is entirely immersed in the billowing mushroom cloud of smoke, which encapsulates the effect of the sublime and the surcharge of horrific images.[23] As Jarman notes, “[t]here is a terrible impotence in this film that makes one feel helpless,” and the overall effect is quite numbing (Jarman 1990: 15). Only a sense of profound brokenness follows the climax at fig.116. Britten offers no redeeming recapitulation, but rather a long diminuendo comprising fragmentary statements of the “Doomed Youth” and “Libera me” themes, which die slowly away, thereby anticipating the descent “down some profound dull tunnel” in the composer’s final setting of Owen’s poetry (Owen 1963: 35).

22 What better *mélange* to save for the end of the *War Requiem* than Owen’s poem “Strange Meeting,” which reunites a soldier—fleeing to the underworld in order to escape the hell of the battlefield—with a soldier he killed the day before.[24] This scene allows Jarman to subtly

bring out the homoerotic undertones in Owen's poem by staging "a figure who is simultaneously an object of desire, a rival, and an aspect of the self" (Wymer 2019: 125). As R. Jahan Ramazani states, "the sublime is explicitly a *staged* confrontation with death," and here the viewer is confronted with the improbable, though strangely satisfying, posthumous reconciliation between two enemies (Ramazani 1989: 164). Jarman's film dramatizes this episode by highlighting how the sublime setting of the soldiers' vertiginous descent contrasts significantly with the transcendental sublime evoked earlier by the boys' choir. The film first depicts an encounter between Owen and the German solider (whom Owen killed) and then one between the German soldier and the Unknown Solider (whom the German soldier killed). The return of "Strange Meeting" thus functions as a kind of bookending to the film, throughout which the "unquiet past" accompanying the sequence of flashbacks at the beginning re-emerges (Wiebe 2015: *passim*). Despite breaking into the otherworldly realm, the uncanny setting in Britten's Requiem does not resolve the harmonic tension manifest in the tritone interval and the trauma redolent in Owen's verse: "Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were" (Owen 1963: 36). Although the sublime transgression into paradise is exemplified by the preliminary harmonic serenity of pentatonicism, the dissonant interval haunts the closing stages of the work. This epitomises the unusual nature of the encounter, which is brought to the fore when the two soldiers meet and Owen delivers the line "Strange friend; I said, here is no cause to mourn" (35). It is noteworthy that when the Unknown Soldier replies at fig.121, the tritones are resolved to perfect fourths. This seems to suggest that the soldier accepts his fate, especially in the film, because at this point Jarman depicts the German soldier raising his hand in the same two-finger salute as the nurse earlier, thus reflecting Owen's line: "Lifting distressful hands as if to bless" (35). Again, light plays a prominent role here: Owen initially emerges through a gloomy tunnel carrying a candle while the German soldier is depicted through close-up shots with light flickering across his face. Jarman in fact uses the candle throughout the film as a visual metaphor as well as a transitional device. It is often snuffed out at the end of scenes, thereby evocatively alluding to the lives cast into darkness as a result of war and the AIDS crisis, while the ensuing smoke forms a curtain, blurring the end of one scene and the beginning of another.

23 The soldiers transform the poem’s final line “‘Let us sleep now…’” into a sort of coda, performed in the style of a recitative.[25] At fig.128, the boys’ choir pours its “divine” light on the soloists’ lament with the antiphon text “In paradisum,” which asks God to have mercy upon the deceased at the Last Judgment. Their luminous melodies outline perfect fourths and create the expectation of a peaceful ending. This is the last time the soldiers are heard as their interpretation of the poem’s final line is integrated into the texture of the chorus’s development of the “In paradisum” (in eight-part canon), which is taken up by the soprano and the full orchestra. Whether the work reaches a peaceful resolution is debatable. At fig.131(+3), the boys’ choir moves to a simple intoning on E, which clashes with the D pedal in the strings. The final diatonic *tutti* statements, symbolising an ultimate staging of unanimity, are repeatedly broken by the abrupt returns of the tritone in the bells and the boys’ choir chanting a distant, impassive prayer for “Requiem æternam” at fig.135(+1) and fig.136(+1). Reusing the brief “Kyrie Eleison” from the opening movement, Britten ultimately resolves the augmented fourth into F major in the “Requiescant in Pace.” Yet, even though it is a stable major sonority, it appears unsettlingly out-of-place here for the same reasons discussed above regarding the end of the opening movement, and especially because the bells continue to chime the tritone interval at fig.136(+9) and fig.137(+3). This peculiar mixture of serenity and discordance is conceivably Britten’s way of letting the unresolved rest, that forces the listener to reconsider the reconciliation enacted through the poem with “more than a hint of scepticism” (Cooke 1996: 87). Through the final moments of the score, Jarman again draws the viewer’s attention to the film’s artifice by reanimating the Unknown Soldier as a tableau vivant in the manner of Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca’s mid-fifteenth-century masterpiece *The Resurrection* [See Illustration 3].

Illustration 3. "Unknown Soldier" as a tableau vivant in the manner of Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca's mid-fifteenth-century masterpiece *The Resurrection.*



Derek Jarman, *War Requiem* (1989).

24 The Unknown Soldier (Christ) holds a flag with the cross of Saint George (the Roman Praetorian Guard and adopted patron saint of England) while standing on his own tomb, with four soldiers sleeping at its base. By highlighting the limits of representation and the potentially facile ways in which art memorializes the traumatic past, Jarman brings to mind Owen's well-known line, appearing in the preface to his collected works, which states that "All a poet can do today is warn" (Owen 1963: 31). The German soldier (now in civilian clothing) advances through the chapel towards the Unknown Soldier and between ranks of military personnel carrying white crosses. Both soldiers are transfixed in each other's gaze, in what seem to be purposefully ambiguous gazes, that are possibly full of "piteous recognition," but also potentially full of longing, lust, and/or hate (35). The final shot of the Unknown Soldier, seen through the eyes of the nurse, replaces his figure by the light of the candle. Like Britten, Jarman provides a hint of serenity as the nurse places a basket of white poppies on the ground, which contrasts with the wreath of red poppies

left by the German soldier and implicitly symbolises a "memorial to peace" (Jarman 1990: 14).

25 This article has sought to demonstrate how Britten's *War Requiem* and Jarman's film adaptation represent cultural and personal trauma as a perpetual flame passed on from one generation to the next, which, like the sublime, epitomises how "we catch a fire already kindled in another" (Burke 1759: 290). The intergenerational transmission of war trauma is thus passed on like cultural memory not only through commemorative events memorializing the war, but also through the canon of war poetry, painting, and music. Jarman's *War Requiem* is a multimedia palimpsest conflating different wars and temporalities. Through the war veteran's memories and the newsreel footage, the film mixes personal and collective memories of warfare. While Jarman's structuring of his film as a series of flashbacks or dream sequences appears to critique the recurrent metaphor of sleepwalking in historical narratives of the First World War, it also evokes the uncanny or alienating effect of traumatic memory.[26] By emphasizing the dislocation between the characters and the soundtrack, Jarman underlines the complex nature of "re-membering" the traumatic past, thereby creating the impression of an irreconcilable history. Although neither the Requiem nor the film are able to capture the sonic magnitude of the battlefield, they certainly reflect on the loss war represents through sound. As Jarman's characters have no voice, and no means of directly expressing their interiority, they epitomise the voiceless victims of war. In the same vein as literary works such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Louis-Ferdinand Céline's the *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932), the Requiem and the film stir the impression of attempting to trace trauma to its origins, only to encounter the negating repetition of the ineffable. As Poole suggests, this dramatic predicament is double-edged given "[r]epetition can be a benign and vital means to renewal, regeneration, even redemption; [however] it can also be a vacuous and pernicious means to enslavement, mortification, paralysis" (Poole 2019: 173). That Jarman turns Britten's *War Requiem* into a soundtrack to the horrors of the twentieth century reflects the significantly new forms of the sublime—which, to quote Wurth, as a concept

> is notably no longer directed at grand and violent nature with a triumphant, autonomous subject towering above it, but at massive, man-made atrocities (WWI, the Holocaust, Hiroshima) that attest to the utter failure of the humanist project. Instead of an experience of elevation, […] this twentieth-century alternative to the traditional sublime feeling signals precisely an inability to overcome and come to terms with events that (still) defy imaginative and also conceptual grasp. (Wurth 2009: 254)

26 Britten was clearly intent on deconstructing the ritualised character of public mourning and commemoration exemplified by the traditional Requiem form. His integration of Owen’s poetry into the sacred setting serves the work’s ironic and subversive commentary not only on the corruption of war and religious institutions, but also on the Requiem itself, exposing it as another soiled document of history. This gives the *War Requiem* a distinctly “anti-monumental” character (to use Andreas Huyssen’s words), which opposes the formidable structures of nineteenth-century commemorative musical works (Huyssen 1996: 198). As Alexander Rehding remarks, anti-monumental works are no less memorable for that because, by dismantling the “imaginary link between musical bigness and greatness,” they destabilise the familiarity of grand aesthetic structures and emerge as indelible records of subversion (Rehding 2009: 9). The central position of trauma in Britten’s *War Requiem* and Jarman’s film reflects Ankersmit’s proposition that in order to approximate an understanding of “Western historical consciousness,” one needs to interpret the major historical events through the eyes of a “cultural psychoanalyst,” as a series of cultural traumas, given “our sole contact with or experience of reality in which reality discloses to us its true nature, its radical strangeness and majestic indifference to us occurs in trauma” (Ankersmit 2002: 74).

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1 The title page of the draft manuscript score, held at the British Library, bears Britten’s original dedication: “In Commemoration of all the Fellow-Sufferers of the Second World War, & in loving memory of Roger Burney, Piers Dunkerley, David Gill, Michael Halliday.” As Mervyn Cooke comments, Britten subsequently crossed out the reference to the “Fellow-Sufferers” in the published score, “possibly fearing that his own acknowledged status during the war as a pacifist and conscientious objector might open the way for criticism of his identifying with ‘genuine’ sufferers” (Cooke 1996: 47).

2 As Louise Campbell points out, between the acceptance of Spence’s architectural plan in 1951 and the cathedral’s consecration in 1962, “architectural attitudes changed very fast. [...] Although the juxtaposition of the ruins and the new cathedral [...] was not a device of which every architect in 1951 approved, it was well suited to the mood of the period. By 1958, this kind of approach had come to seem both romantic and unadventurous” (Campbell 1996: 254).

3 Britten’s opera *Owen Wingrave* (1972), based on a short story by Henry James, also explores the themes of warfare and pacifism.

4 Britten was also certainly familiar with the work of Jennings given that he composed the music for his film *Night Mail* (1936).

5 Jarman died of an AIDS-related illness on 19 February 1994. He engages explicitly with the subject of HIV and homophobia in others works, writing in his memoirs, *At Your Own Risk: A Saint’s Testament* (1992), of feeling ostracised in a homophobic society: “I watched life going by, people falling in love and I was no longer part of it. I was living in another land, no man’s land” (Jarman 1992a: 83). In his series of paintings entitled “Queer” (1992), he provocatively challenges the British establishment by repurposing homophobic newspaper headlines to make assemblages with his own politically-charged messages painted in thick impasto.

6 Marianne Hirsch explores the notion of transgenerational trauma in *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012), using the term “postmemory” which “describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (Hirsch 2012: 5)

7 Margaret Thatcher fuelled homophobia in the UK by targeting the gay community and calling homosexuals the “enemies within” (Brooke and Cameron 1996: 640).

8 Prior to *War Requiem*, Britten had composed ten operas, often setting literary or poetic texts. These include *Billy Budd* (1950), *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), and A *Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1960).

9 The “Libera me,” like the “In Paradisum,” is not part of the liturgical text of the Requiem Mass, but a part of the burial rite that follows. It only began to be included in musical settings of the Requiem from the nineteenth century onwards.

10 On 4 August 1964, for example, a performance of the *War Requiem* was given to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. The concert was held at the Royal Albert Hall, with Meredith Davies conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Britten conducting the Melos Ensemble. The boys’ choir was placed high up in the gallery above the organ.

11 For a discussion of “Owen, Britten and Pacifism,” see Cooke 1996: 1-19.

12 “Les récits et les œuvres poétiques des combattants insistent sur l’étrangeté de la guerre, vécue comme une expérience de l’absolue différence.” All translations my own unless otherwise stated.

13 Owen was killed in action a month later on 4 November 1918, a week before the signing of the Armistice which ended the war.

14 *War Requiem* was mainly filmed at Darenth Park Hospital, a recently closed Victorian mental asylum.

15 Owen’s dismantling of the narrative of combatant masculinity was a precursor to what became a central motif in modernist literature; for example, in Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* (1922), Jacob Flanders is depicted as part of a generation of soldiers whose lives were cut short by the inhumane, predominately masculine, warring ideologies. Likewise, the shell-shocked young veteran Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) commits suicide.

16 See Laub 2005: 253-65.

17 “Fig.” refers to the corresponding figure number that appears in the musical score used to demarcate sections.

18 G flat is the enharmonic equivalent to F sharp.

19 The bugle also features prominently in Jarman’s depiction of the “Libera me” final movement, where it is notably silent. It first appears in the hands of a boy, then the hands of the Unknown Soldier, and finally half-submerged in a muddy puddle. In the filmscript, Jarman describes this as symbolising how the twentieth century “squandered the beauty of the world” (Jarman 1990: 15).

20 Religious instruction regarding sacrifice is also ironized in the third movement, the “Offertorium.” In Owen’s poem “The Parable of the Old Man and the Young”, an angel instructs Abram to “Offer the Ram of Pride” instead of his son. Abram ignores the angel and so “slew his son, / And half the seed of Europe, one by one” (Owen 1963: 42). Jarman adapts this scene cinematically with Owen imagining himself as Isaac, who is about to be sacrificed by his father in front of a crowd of eagerly awaiting establishment figures representing the Church and State.

21 Jarman was a painter himself and many of his paintings (like his series “Queer” mentioned in footnote 5) resemble works of abstraction. For his film, he first transferred the original documentary film to video and then applied his special effects.

22 This phrase comes from H. G. Wells *The War That Will End War*, first published in 1914.

23 This recalls Gene Ray’s claim that “[n]otions of the sublime had also long hovered near the after-images of Hiroshima” (Ray 2020: 13).

24 C. Day Lewis remarks that for Owen, the soldier, “those on the other side of the barbed wire were fellow sufferers” (Owen 1963: 22).

25 In his memoir *At Your Own Risk* (1992), Jarman begins with a poignant reflexion on death through an anecdote involving the burning of an old tree, during which he quotes Heraclitus: “A man strikes a light for himself in the night when his sight is quenched. Living, he touches the dead in his sleep. Waking, he touches the sleeper” (Jarman 1992a: 3).

26 This is the central premise of Christopher Clark’s *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (2012).

English

This article offers a comparative reading of Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*, Op. 66 (1962) and Derek Jarman’s eponymously titled cinematographic adaptation (1989). It examines how both of these works represent personal and collective memory by conflating the traumas of the First and Second World War through their inclusion of Wilfred Owen’s war poetry as a literary intertext. I show how the musical composition and the film both function as multi-layered intermedial structures, which not only denounce the carnage of warfare, but also evoke the complex ways in which art, and official commemoration in particular, can mediate traumatic memory. I analyse the tension between commemoration and subversion in Britten’s and Jarman’s artistic strategies through the lens of the sublime, in particular what Kiene Brillenburg Wurth terms an “(an)aesthetics of shock.”

Français

Cet article propose une lecture comparée du *War Requiem*, op. 66 (1962) et de l’adaptation cinématographique éponyme de Derek Jarman (1989). Il examine comment ces deux œuvres représentent la mémoire collective et personnelle en créant un télescopage entre les traumatismes de la Première et de la Seconde Guerre mondiale à travers leur inclusion de la poésie de guerre de Wilfred Owen comme un intertexte littéraire. Je montre comment la composition musicale et le film fonctionnent comme des structures intermédiales qui multiplient les strates de signification non seulement pour dénoncer le carnage de la guerre, mais aussi pour mettre l’accent sur le rôle complexe de l’art, et des commémorations officielles en particulier, dans la transmission de la mémoire traumatique. J’analyse la tension entre commémoration et subversion dans les stratégies artistiques de Britten et Jarman à travers le prisme du concept de sublime, notamment ce que Kiene Brillenburg Wurth appelle une « (an)esthétique du choc ».

Mots-clés
Britten (Benjamin), Owen (Wilfred), Jarman (Derek), guerre, trauma, sublime

Keywords
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