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Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity*

BY MAYNARD SOLOMON

Charles Ives was by nature a reviser—and not only of scores. He was never content with things as they were, whether these were his own or other people's music, the way governments were run, life insurance was sold, or even the unshakeable facts of existence. If things needed changing, and they usually did, he would see what could be done about them. This had fairly predictable psychological consequences but quite unexpected musicological implications.

To start with the former: Ives's biographers have all portrayed an utterly idealized relationship between father and son, stressing Ives's positive attachment to his father, the Danbury bandmaster George Ives. In both conventional and psychoanalytic biographical studies, Ives's father is described as the primary shaping force in the composer's life and work.¹ "His father's is the influence Charles Ives most proudly acknowledges," wrote the Cowells, who inaugurated this emphasis in their authorized biography of the composer, "and it is not too much to say that the son has written his father's music for him" (Cowell and Cowell 1969, 12).

There is, of course, much evidence that Ives's early identification with his father did not diminish after the death of George Ives in 1894. Rather, with the passage of time, it became increasingly monumentalized, for Ives felt that he needed his father to establish and to reinforce ethical standards of conduct for him: "Father died just at the time I needed him most," he wrote to his future father-in-law in 1907; "It's been years since I've had an older man that I felt like going to when things seem to go wrong or a something comes up when it's hard to figure out which is the best or right thing to do" (Ives 1972,

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¹ Rossiter 1975, 49–53; Feder 1980, 239; Feder 1985.

261). "How I want to see Father again!" he would often exclaim to his wife (Ives 1972, 249). Indeed, as the years passed he spoke of his father as if he were mentally, even physically, alive for him: in his nephew's words, "as if he felt his presence all the time" (Perlis 1974, 88). It may not be an exaggeration to say, as Kirkpatrick did, that he lived "almost in a state of Chinese ancestor worship" (Perlis 1974, 225). He sought father substitutes but he never found them, partly because he feared closeness, perhaps also because he wished to remain faithful to his father's memory. In 1930 he recalled to one of his mentors, John Cornelius Griggs, his feelings when his father died: "I went around looking and looking for some man to sort of help fill up that awful vacuum I was carrying around with me—the men among my classmates—the tutors program, etc.—and a kind of idea that Parker might—but he didn't—" (Ives 1972, 257–58). A feeling of emptiness, of incompleteness, pursued Charles Ives even in his full maturity. He never came to terms with his father's death.

As he gained fame as a composer, Ives began to attribute his achievements to his father's guidance. "I feel that, if I have done anything that is good in music, I owe it almost entirely to him and his influence," he wrote to John Tasker Howard (letter of 30 June 1930, in Ives 1972, 237). Writing in the following year, Ives repeated:

One thing I am certain of is that if I have done anything good in music, it was, first, because of my father, and second, because of my wife. What she has done for me I won't put down, because she won't let me . . .

What my father did for me was not only in his teaching, on the technical side, etc., but in his influence, his personality, character, and open-mindedness, and his remarkable understanding of the ways of a boy's heart and mind (Ives 1972, 114–15).

However, the existence of copious autobiographical evidence signalling a son's apparently unswerving devotion to his father should itself have placed biographers on the alert. If an individual were to offer a therapist a quantity of such materials concerning one of the main figures in his biography, while saying little or nothing about other members of his family, the psychoanalyst would quickly be on guard, probing for the reasons for these curious imbalances. Ives would not be the first son or daughter to leave a tangle of false trails indicative of unalloyed filial piety. "First comes God, then Papa," wrote Mozart even as he was struggling to free himself from Leopold Mozart's stifling domination.

The standard portrait of the Ives's father-and-son relationship stems almost wholly from Ives's own writings, especially from the extraordinary memoranda that he began to prepare in 1931 for eventual use by his biographers, entitled *Memos* in John Kirkpatrick's edition published in 1972. However, to a much greater extent than other personal documents such as letters or contemporary journals, autobiographical writings are notoriously subject to distortions, deceptions, and special pleadings. Autobiography occupies a zone between self-discovery and self-invention, between the faithful reconstruction of the past and an imaginative reshaping of distant events to serve present needs.² The autobiographical act is often a medium for reconciling conflicting aspects of the self; it is a creative process, and thus lends itself to revisionist pursuits.

The evidence about Ives and his father can be read in ways other than have been suggested by those who unquestioningly take Ives's cue in idealizing their relationship. Ives's profound devotion to his father, his need for his father's approval, his gratitude for the musical training he received from him are not in question. And in becoming a musician, following in his father's footsteps, Ives clearly identified closely—almost symbiotically—with his father. However, it seems possible that Ives's innate competitiveness—which we know from his athletic, business, and musical pursuits—was also finding an outlet here. For Ives thereby took control of his father's profession. In aspiring to be a composer he aimed to surpass his father's achievement and perhaps even his expectations, for it appears that George Ives wanted Ives to be a professional pianist. Harmony Ives told Kirkpatrick, "Charlie's father had wanted him to be a concert pianist, but he was much too shy—he couldn't face that being-alone on the stage in front of an audience" (Ives 1972, 102–3 n. 7). There is no independent confirmation that his father intended Ives for a composer's career and there are (admittedly ambiguous) signs that he may have discouraged the young boy's compositional experiments, very much as, early on, Beethoven's father had urged him to avoid improvisation and to adhere closely to the rules.³ However, it was not only as a musician that Charles Ives eventually transcended his father: in entering Yale College he aligned himself with those respected elders of his family—including two who attended Yale—who contrasted with his father by their unwavering adherence to the reality principle,

² See, for example, Pascal 1960, Olney 1980, and Eakin 1985.

³ Ives 1972, 38, 47. The Cowells report that George Ives taught Charles Ives "on the strictest academic principles. Experiment, he told his son, could come later" (Cowell and Cowell 1969, 26).

which is to say, dedication to success in business. His father's death at the very moment of Ives's entrance into Yale was perhaps a devastating confirmation that unacknowledged wishes to go beyond his father had had their effect. Later, Ives not only became a composer, but went into business as well, thus becoming a major figure in two careers in which his father had not made his mark.

Of course, such competition is usually an epiphenomenon of more fundamental issues, and here the data is still extremely sparse. Although Ives's mother, Mary Parmelee ("Mollie") Ives, lived until 1929, surviving her husband by thirty-five years, Ives is oddly silent about her in his writings and reminiscences, implying that their relationship was one that he wished to preserve from intrusion.⁴ Perhaps it touched upon one of those areas in which Ives could scarcely win a competition with George Ives, those pertaining precisely to the central roles of fatherhood. For George Ives would always remain Mollie Ives's husband and Charles Ives's procreator. And, because of Harmony Ives's surgery for cancer in 1909, she and Ives were precluded from having their own children, later raising a daughter by adoption (Wooldridge 1974, 144-45).

Unable to surpass his father in his most fundamental roles and perhaps hoping to avoid reprisals for imagined transgressions, we may surmise that Ives was impelled to make his father his permanent collaborator, idealizing their relationship, purifying his own motives, and professing a filial piety of immaculate quality. Ives was revising. (That may be why he says nothing about his mother: he had no need to write about her, to evoke her in conversation or on the page. Perhaps she was always with him, unchanging, loving, satisfying. She didn't require revision.) Ives's portrait of a conflict-free relationship with his father is at best a partial view, though an extremely consoling one for both subject and biographer. Consoling, for if we can discover in a creative figure—whom we take as a model of our own behavior—a total absence of the ambivalence we feel toward our own parents and their surrogates, there is still hope that we, too, can achieve an equivalent state of grace.

⁴ Kirkpatrick accurately observes: "In later years Ives talked and wrote so devotedly about his father that one tends hardly to notice his mother" (Ives 1972, 247). From all accounts, Ives was her devoted son, while she manifested a fervent belief in his musical genius and a protective desire to shield him from physical injury (Perlis 1974, 72, 88).

II

The issue of veracity does not arise thus far; rather, there may well be a strong element of self-deception here, rising from Ives's need to idealize his relationship with his father, to erase all the signs of a boy's normal competitiveness towards his male parent, and to obtain posthumous sanction for his actions. Apparently, however, Ives's repeated bows to the beneficence of his father's teachings and his numerous expressions of love and respect for the Danbury cornetist were insufficient to his purposes. Ives intensified his efforts, and in doing so he may have crossed the line between delusion and deception. His retrospective monumentalization of his father now took an extraordinary form: In a remarkable series of statements and anecdotes, he credited George Ives with having anticipated if not invented more than a handful of the procedures and techniques of twentieth-century musical modernism, such as polyrhythms, polytonality, atonality, quarter-tone composition, infinite divisions or condensations of the musical scale, and tonal collage. There is space for only a few examples out of many:

Father used to say, . . . "why not chords of 4ths? . . . why not measures of $\frac{3}{4}$ then $\frac{4}{4}$, alternating and following? If the whole tones can be divided equally, why not half tones? . . . [W]hy can't the ear learn a hundred other intervals if it wants to try? . . . If the mind can learn to use a two against . . . a three, why not nine vs. eleven? . . . If the mind can learn to use two rhythms together, why can't it [use] five or worse together? . . . If the mind can understand one key, why can't it learn to understand another key with it?" (Ives 1972, 140).

In his 1930 letter to John Tasker Howard, he wrote that his father's "study of acoustics led him to many experiments into the character of musical instruments and of tonal combinations, and even into the divisions of the tone" (Ives 1972, 237). "My father had a weakness for quarter-tones," Ives wrote in a 1924 article, continuing: "He rigged up a contrivance to stretch 24 or more violin strings and tuned them up to suit the dictates of his own curiosity. He would pick out quarter-tone tunes and try to get the family to sing them, but I remember he gave that up except as a means of punishment" (Ives 1970, 110). Ives recalled other contraptions built by George Ives to help in his tonal experiments (Ives 1972, 45). Throughout his *Memos*, Ives attributed his own interest in various modernist procedures to his father's experiments and precepts. He wrote that his father "liked to . . . beat out dissonances on the piano," a practice from which Ives apparently

derived the so-called “piano-drum writing” so characteristic of his experimental pieces (Ives 1970, 111). Ives portrayed himself as the inheritor of a grand paternal tradition, of which he was the grateful and not wholly autonomous instrument.

Naturally, Ives was careful not to claim too much for George Ives’s innovations: describing how his father had the children sing a tune like “Swanee River” in E-flat while accompanying in C, he acknowledged: “I don’t think he had the possibility of polytonality in composition in mind” (Ives 1972, 115). But such caveats are far from sufficient when one considers that George Ives was neither a composer nor an aesthete. “He did but little composing,” explained his son, who now is having it both ways, simultaneously exaggerating and minimizing his father’s accomplishments—only “a few things or arrangements for bands—in fact, he had little interest in it for himself, and it was too bad he didn’t, for it would have shown these interests.” Nor, continued Ives, did his father “write textbooks . . . and he didn’t write many letters” (Ives 1972, 45). Thus, any confirmation of George Ives’s musical experiments and inventions, apart from his son’s reminiscences, is to be sought in the testimony of his contemporaries. And here the record is singularly deficient, indeed is limited to one recollection, by Danbury resident Philip Sunderland, that George Ives arranged to have two bands marching through town, so that “the two would clash . . . blending and playing different tunes” (Perlis 1974, 16).

This is not to say that George Ives was lacking in musical talent or training: at sixteen he had been sent to New York to study piano, theory, cornet, and German with several competent teachers; his notebooks show a rigorous course of study in harmony and counterpoint.⁵ After service as a Union bandmaster in the Civil War he eventually returned to Danbury and was at the center of that town’s musical life for two decades, until the rise of increasingly genteel musical tastes among the region’s wealthier classes relegated vernacular music to a secondary status, making it difficult for its practitioners to earn a living as musicians. Until the later 1880s, when that shift in musical values was largely completed, George Ives was an active professional musician, “whose fame and activities spread to a large area of Western Connecticut and New York State” (Wallach 1973, 47). He was a music teacher and choral conductor at various times, but his main occupation was as founder and leader of a band that was much in demand to provide music at churches, picnics, fairs, town

⁵ Kirkpatrick 1960, 213–16; Wallach 1973, 37–94; Wooldridge 1974, 29.

dances, temperance rallies, camp meetings, political events, and on all patriotic and festive civic occasions. He and his men also worked at summer resorts in Connecticut and, in the off season, travelled with minstrel troupes or as a steamboat band on various waterways. Occasionally, George Ives also produced ambitious benefit concerts featuring soloists, community chorus, and orchestra in the usual nineteenth-century melanges of heart songs, band music, banjo-picking, and classical favorites. The newspaper notices for his concerts—which featured several of his arrangements and a potpourri entitled *A Musical Trip to Coney Island*—do not convey the slightest hint of a precocious modernism. Wallach has surveyed all of the information from public sources about George Ives's career, but in it, as Burkholder observed, "There is not a word about [his supposed] investigations into polytonality, microtones, new chords and scales, or other basic materials of music."⁶

Aware of the paucity of external evidence to support his claims, Ives quoted a singular letter from his father to one of his music students, in which George Ives discussed the state of contemporary music at some length:

The older I get. . . [and] the more I play music and think about it, the more certain I am that many teachers (mostly Germans) are gradually circumscribing a great art by these rules, rules, rules, with which they wrap up the students' ears and minds as a lady does her hair—habit and custom all underneath. They (the Prof's) take these rules for granted, because some Prof ~~old~~ taught them to them . . . etc. . . . What they teach is partly true, but is it all true? See what Helmholtz says about natural laws—the danger of restricting music to habits and customs, and [giving] these natural laws as an excuse. I am fully convinced [that] if music be not allowed to grow, if it's denied the privilege of evolution that all other arts and life have, if [in the] natural processes of ear and mind it is not allowed [to] grow bigger by finding possibilities that nature has for music, more and wider scales, new combinations of tone, new keys and more keys and beats, and phrases together. . . everything will be used up. . . and music as a creative art will die—for to compose will be but to manufacture conventionalized MUSH—and that's about what student composers are being taught to do (Ives 1972, 47–48, transcription amended).

Kirkpatrick, concluding that the lengthy final sentence sounds exactly like Charles Ives, places before it the close quotation mark that Ives had neglected to supply. To debate on stylistic grounds whether the earlier portions of the letter were written by the father or by the

⁶ Burkholder 1985a, 48; Wallach 1973, 37–94.

son may be beside the point, for the letter is entirely in Charles Ives's hand and, in the absence of the original, there is no compelling reason to accept that it ever existed.

But now we have found ourselves wandering in a perplexing hall of mirrors. Two voices merge, that of Charles Ives in continuation of or in counterpoint to that of his father. We look at the image of George Ives and see instead his son wearing a Yankee bandmaster's garb and speaking a language that his father would never have known. If the voice of George Ives is really but a projection of Charles Ives, then the father has yielded his real personality in favor of a fictional persona created by his son. Out of deepest piety, impelled by a compound of love and guilt, Ives has preempted his father's historical existence, and replaced him with a fabulous personage—who happens to bear the same name. Instead of repairing the loss of his father, Ives has unwittingly managed to repeat the process of displacing him.

III

To this point, it seems probable that there was a strong element of self-deception in Ives's fantasies about his father and in his exaggeration of his father's pioneering musical role. To buttress his idealized portrait of his father, Ives had credited him with his own musical paternity, invoked him as his posthumous collaborator. But these fantasies and exaggerations had an unexpected consequence: to maintain them, Ives had now to embroider the historical record. His defense of his father's memory required that he leave the realm of fantasy and self-deception and set out to remold reality so that it would conform with his assumptions. And he could do so with good conscience and filial piety at his back. For he now had his father's priority—as well as his own—to protect.

If his father, in his own common-sense New England way and in accordance with the tenets of Transcendental philosophy, had foreshadowed good portions of twentieth-century modernism, inspiring his son in his musical experiments, it naturally followed that Ives could not acknowledge influences from other composers and teachers. That is why satisfactory answers to certain fundamental questions cannot be found in Ives's writings: Nowhere in *Essays Before a Sonata* or *Memos* does Ives detail his musical influences, name the modern composers he admired, or describe those techniques and procedures that he adapted or extended from the practice of other composers. Indeed, *Memos*, to judge from its opening paragraphs, may well have originated as a polemical attempt to deny the influence of other

composers. Caustically responding to printed comments by Henri Prunières, Philip Hale, and W. J. Henderson, Ives asserts his utter innocence of the major currents in modern music: “Professor Prunières . . . says that I know my Schoenberg—interesting information to me, as I have never heard nor seen a note of Schoenberg’s music.” And again, “up to the present writing [i.e., August 1931], I have not seen or heard any of Hindemith’s music.” And: “All of the music that I have written, with the exception of about a dozen or fifteen songs, was completed before I had seen or heard any of the music of the European composers [Hale] cites as influencing [me and other] . . . American composers” (Ives 1972, 27–29). Ives claimed not to have heard Mahler’s music, even though he attended at least one New York Philharmonic concert during Mahler’s tenure in New York (probably in 1911, a season in which Mahler’s Fourth Symphony was played twice) and offered him his own Third Symphony for performance; he said that he first heard Stravinsky only in 1919 or 1920 (though his wife says that he heard *Firebird* earlier). “I’ve never heard or seen the score of the *Sacre du Printemps*,” he wrote in the 1930’s, “yet I’ve been told . . . that some of my music—for instance, *Putnam’s Camp* . . . —had been strongly influenced by [it].”⁷ Bewilderingly—for he has forgotten what he just wrote—he instantly assures us: “Personally I don’t believe they have anything in common.”

Ives offers several explanations for his admittedly singular abstention from contact with the work of his contemporaries. Apart from lack of time, he writes, hearing other people’s music “seemed to confuse me in my own work . . . I found that I could work more naturally and with more concentration if I didn’t hear much music, especially unfamiliar music.”⁸ Furthermore, he had a powerful, undisguised antipathy to virtually all contemporary music not of his own making. He thought Ravel and Stravinsky “morbid and monotonous,” their music exemplifying “a kind of false beauty obtained by artistic monotony” (Ives 1972, 138; 1970, 39). Elliott Carter recalled

⁷ Ives 1972, 138. And, concerning another passage from *Three Places in New England*, he expostulated, “When people make an absolute and definite statement that it is from Stravinsky, they lie” (Ives 1972, 139).

⁸ Ives 1972, 137; see also Cowell and Cowell 1969, 217–18. In an unpublished alternative draft of this memo, Ives wrote: “I’d get sort of bothered if I went to concerts when I had something in my mind & underway—that I was thinking about or actually working on—[H]earing other music or even looking over other scores etc. sort of mixed me up—or rather put me somewhat out of my stride—” (Ives Archives, Mss 14/Box 26/6). Nevertheless, Kirkpatrick observes that “for years Ives subscribed to the Thursday afternoon Philharmonic concerts, and the Saturday Boston Symphony concerts” (personal communication to the author, April 1987).

Ives's poking fun at *Le Sacre* and *Daphnis and Chloé* as being "too easy" (Carter 1939, 172). To Ives, Hindemith was merely "a nice German boy;" Strauss, he wrote, "has chosen the complexity of media . . . against the inner, invisible activity of truth;" Debussy's music was permeated by a "sensual sensuousness"—it would have been better, Ives reflected, if he had "hoed corn or sold newspapers for a living."⁹ Even though Mahler was not worth hearing, Ives nevertheless felt entitled to dress him down for concealing the paucity of his symphonic ideas by scoring for an excessively large orchestra (Ives 1970, 86). Sibelius aroused Ives's most virulent reaction: "A thing hinting that music might some day die, like an emasculated cherry, dead but dishonored—was to see those young people . . . seriously eating that yellow sap flowing from a stomach that had never had an idea. And some of them are probably composing, and you can see them going home, copying down those slimy grooves and thinking they are creating something—helping music decline—dying—dying—dead" (Ives 1972, 136). The list of modern composers not even judged worthy of mention by Ives is extensive. (It is surely a matter for wonder that Ives's 1924 article, "Some 'Quarter-Tone' Impressions," fails even to mention Carrillo, Busoni, or Hába [Ives 1970, 107–19].) So far as I can tell, his friend Carl Ruggles was the only modernist to draw Ives's unstinted admiration; Ruggles, along with Cowell, had the additional honor of being just about the only American composer after Foster, Parker, and D.G. Mason to be mentioned by Ives at all. Evenhandedly, Ives's antipathy extended to the older composers as well. He praised Franck, d'Indy, Elgar for their "wholesomeness, manliness, humility, and deep spiritual . . . feeling" (Ives 1970, 73); but he frankly condemned as "emasculated" works by Mozart, Mendelssohn, early Beethoven, Haydn, Massenet, Tchaikovsky, Gounod, Wagner, and Chopin ("one just naturally thinks of him with a skirt on, but one which he made himself") (Ives 1972, 134–35). He recalled returning from a concert in 1912 or 1913 "with a vague but strong feeling that even the best music we know, Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms . . . was too cooped up—more so than nature intended it should be . . . Same old stuff! It came over me again at that [time] (as it had come over Father): Is music an emasculated art? No, not all of it—but too much of it, even the best" (Ives 1972, 100–101). Elsewhere he writes

⁹ Ives 1970, 39, 82, 83; Ives 1972, 28, 138. Rossiter (1981, 111–14) has shown that Ives's musical judgments in *Essays Before a Sonata* are often borrowed from Daniel Gregory Mason's *Contemporary Composers* (New York, 1918), which Ives had read twice by 1919.

approvingly of the three B's—though, in an afterthought, he strikes Brahms's name altogether and finds none of them “as strong and great as Carl Ruggles . . . because [they] have too much of the sugar-plum for the soft-ears . . .” (Ives 1972, 134–35, 44). The implied suggestion that his own music was superior to any other is made explicit on one occasion. Reacting to his brother's warning, “Some might say that you imply that your music is greater . . . than any of the so-called great masters!” Ives responded: “I don't imply any such thing—I don't have to—I state it is better!” (Ives 1972, 135). It is difficult to recall any other composer who so frankly asserted his own preeminence.

Underlying Ives's various claims—that he heard very little modern music, liked almost nothing of what he did hear, and was influenced by nobody except George Ives—is a defensive assertion of his own priority. Indeed, *Memos* itself may be viewed as a brief to establish Ives's priority as a modernist innovator, an audacious and pathetic attempt, backed almost entirely by the composer's own word and little, if any, external circumstantial documentation. Ives's lack of generosity toward his fellow composers strongly suggests the kind of rivalrous personality for whom such issues may become an obsessive preoccupation. As we all know, issues of priority constantly arise in science, scholarship, and the arts; such issues are frequently encountered in twentieth-century modernism, where some tend to confuse the patent-office with the Pantheon, to regard the invention of a new technique as the most significant measure of creativity. Typical of this attitude, the Russian painters Larionov and Goncharova, in order to establish their priority over Picasso and Braque in Cubist techniques, predated their works of 1912–13 to 1909–10. There is no reason to think that Ives, who came to maturity in an age that worshipped Thomas Edison, was immune to this commonplace temptation. And he was singularly well-placed to capitalize upon it, for there were few performances, publications, reviews, or descriptions of his works prior to the 1920's.¹⁰ The absence of public performances is explained as a personal choice: “I seemed to have worked with more natural freedom, when I knew that the music was not going to be played before the public . . .” (Ives 1972, 128). So, if there was little in the contemporary record to suggest the pioneering modernism that later came to be associated with his early efforts, there was also little to contradict it.

¹⁰ In his 30 June 1930 response to John Tasker Howard's questionnaire, Ives listed only seven “important performances” of his works prior to 1930 (Ives 1972, 237–38). Ives omitted virtually all of the pre-1920 notices and reviews from [Ives] Compilation.

IV

The central issue—the veracity of the datings of Ives’s music—was a very real one for Kirkpatrick, in his work on a thorough catalogue of Ives’s music, which he began shortly after Ives’s death in 1954 and published in 1960 as *A Temporary Mimeographed Catalogue of the Music Manuscripts and Related Materials of Charles Edward Ives 1874-1954*. Even though he customarily accepts Ives’s own datings in the absence of clear evidence of their inaccuracy, he remains fully aware of the imperfect evidence on which the datings rested: “All datings in Ives are problematical,” he remarked in 1974; “It’s not that you can’t believe a word he says because he was a liar. He was not a liar, but he had a very sly sense of humor and a very acute New England sense of privacy, and often he’d just throw smoke in your face” (Hitchcock and Perlis 1977, 69). I am perfectly willing to accept Kirkpatrick’s euphemism, though I am not sure that Ives would have been equally compliant. Between 1929 and 1950 the composer prepared nine separate lists of his works, painstakingly setting forth his claims as to when they were composed (Ives 1972, 147–66, app. 2 and 3). (No similar list survives contemporaneous with the supposed period of his greatest productivity.) His autographs are liberally sprinkled with his notations about their putative dates of composition, including hundreds of datable addresses and phone numbers, other external references to datable biographical or historical events, and many specific dates for the commencement, sketching, copying, completion, and performance of the works. However, unlike Schubert, who so conveniently noted on his manuscripts the dates of the commencement and/or completion of works, Ives added many of his notations retrospectively and often these entries are self-serving, in conflict with other datings, or patently false. A relatively few examples will have to suffice here:

—On the sketches of measures 43–57 of the Overture, *The American Woods* (see Figure 1, lower right), Ives notes “76 So. Midd NH Ct,” that being shorthand for his address at Yale for 1894–98. He intended thereby to give the impression that the score—which contains a striking example of “spatial form” (Morgan 1977, 145–58), with simultaneous renditions of a Stephen Foster melody and a barn-dance fiddle tune—was already extant at some point between 1894 and 1898; but Kirkpatrick has found that Ives added the address to this reconstruction for violin and piano “after 1927,” for a photostat of this page made no earlier than that year does not contain the annotation (Kirkpatrick 1960, 35). Whether the memo on the first



Figure 1. *American Woods Overture*: sketches for mm. 43–57. From the Archives of the Music Library of Yale University, New Haven, CT.

page of the sketches for this work—“Get cornet part Billy Hicks played Arthur Clark trombone part . . . send to 76 S. Midd N.H. Ct.”—was also entered after 1927 is not clear at present (see Figure 2); however, Burkholder has concluded from internal evidence that the sketches on this page could not have been written down prior to 1901 or 1902, thus confirming that “Ives added the Yale address retrospectively” (letter to the author, 13 April 1987). Elsewhere, Ives claimed that the Overture was “played in Danbury in the old Wooster House Bandstand in 1889,” but no trace of a performance has survived.¹¹

—It was not until after 1919 that Ives wrote the date “December 28, '14” and the address “27 W. 11” (good November 1914 - 8 May

¹¹ Kirkpatrick 1960, 35; see also Ives 1972, 52.



Figure 2. *American Woods* Overture: sketches for mm. 1–42. From the Archives of the Music Library of Yale University, New Haven, CT.

1915) on page 9 of the autograph of *The Majority, or, The Masses* (Kirkpatrick 1960, viii). The address and date are written over a previous address/date which have been obliterated. The following page, a score for verse 6, contains Ives's marginal remarks—also apparently entered retrospectively—on twelve-note set structure, which Schoenberg and Hauer developed around 1920 (see Figure 3, bottom). Ives's memo begins: "The plan of this in orches[tral] parts is to have each in different rhythm group complete the 12 notes (each on a different system. . ."

—The title-page of the full score of *Washington's Birthday* (first movement of the *Holidays* Symphony) originally read: "return Chas E. Ives 120 East 22 St. N.Y." (good fall 1917 - spring 1926). It was then altered to offer two earlier, alternative addresses—"Hartsdale NY" (good May 1911 - June 1914) and "37 Liberty" (good January 1909 -



Figure 3. *The Majority, or, The Masses*: p. 10; score for verse 6. From the Archives of the Music Library of Yale University, New Haven, CT.

31 January 1914). Finally, all three addresses were crossed out (see Figure 4). If these addresses had been entered in chronological order, one might deduce that successive copyists, working on the score, required each address to return the score to Ives. But the earliest datable reference is for the latest address, suggesting that the earlier datable references were retrospectively entered. In any event, no fair copies survive prior to that by Emil Hanke of the final revision, which closes: “Chas E. Ives 46 Cedar St N.Y.C., N.Y.” (good 1 May 1923 - 30 April 1926).

—On the autograph of *Putnam’s Camp*, from the First Orchestral Set, Ives wrote the words: “Wanted in these you-beknighted states!. . .—more independance—more gumption!—Less Parties and Politics. Election Day 1908— [William Howard] Taft.” Although printed almost entirely in capital letters, the sentence is clearly in



Figure 4. *Washington's Birthday*: title-page of full score. From the Archives of the Music Library of Yale University, New Haven, CT.



Figure 5. *Putnam's Camp* from the First Orchestral Set: patch for mm. 107-8. From the Archives of the Music Library of Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Ives's later hand (see Figure 5). He subsequently gave up this attempt to pre-date *Putnam's Camp* to 1908, placing the words "Whitman's House, Hartsdale N.Y., Oct. 1912" on the score-sketch in dark pencil, thereby obliterating another date. There is no independent evidence that this work was composed prior to the première of *Le Sacre du Printemps* on 29 May 1913, or, indeed, completed much before its own first public performance on 10 January 1931. The score is very heavily revised.

—On one of his lists, Ives dated “Rock of Ages” to 1890. Kirkpatrick appears to regard this as an example of the retrospective entry of a datable reference; he remarked: “the one existing copy is in a handwriting not before 1892, but on a margin it bears a pencil address, ‘16 Stevens St.’ (good only to 9 May 1889). Either the address was there first, or this may be a revision” (Ives 1972, 147).

—The sketches for the *Browning Overture* have sequential datable references of “1908,” “October 1911,” and “July 1912.” However, the page containing measures 1–19 of the full score—which could scarcely precede its own sketches—bears the improbable notation: “Chas E. Ives. 26 Liberty St.,” an address good from 1905 until 31 December 1906. Apparently, Ives had been experimenting with a variety of contradictory dates for *Browning*, and he had overlooked the fact that he had previously entered a datable reference which was inconsistent with his eventual “definitive” datings. The matter becomes further complicated in Ives’s lists and *Memos*. Most of the lists give “1911” as the date of composition, but list C reads: “*Browning* . . . started in 1908, finished in full score in R[edding] 1911” (Ives 1972, 156). Apart from the difficulty that the Iveses were in Redding only after September 1913, this contradicts Ives’s own statement, in *Memos*, that the work had only a brief gestation: “The overture *Browning* . . . was sketched 1912, fully scored . . .” (Ives 1972, 76). Even the phrases “fully scored” and “finished” are problematical, for the published score (Peer International, 1959) incorporates, without acknowledgement, substantial compositional work by Henry Cowell and Lou Harrison (see MS. p. 3114, cited in Kirkpatrick 1960, 227).

In some instances, a work begun at an earlier date is later revised and/or completed, but the later dates are suppressed.

—Ives claimed that *Washington’s Birthday* (in its first version for violin and piano) was “started Oct 22 1909 at 70 W. 11” (note on page 1 of the score-sketch), rescored in “1913,” and was performed in November 1914 and spring 1915, and then in 1918 or 1919 at the Ives’s home, by members of the New York Symphony Orchestra. Neither the parts nor the scores for any of these performances have survived, suggesting that the work underwent revisions prior to Hanke’s fair copy (1923–26). Ives’s claim that “some of the parts which seemed to me to be the best and strongest, were removed” for the 1918–19 performance cannot, of course, be verified; it appears to be an attempt to explain any potential discrepancy between reports of the score as earlier performed and as ultimately published (Ives 1972, 98).

—Ives's pencil sketch of verses 1 and 2 of *Psalm 67* for unaccompanied chorus, a polyharmonic work written in G minor with C major superimposed, contains, in a youthful hand, the notation "C.E. Ives P.O. Box 432 Danbury," thus apparently placing these verses in the period from 9 May 1899 to around 1900. Whether the accidentals and the key signature were added later is difficult to say. However, it is clear that on a photostat of this very page Ives has inked over most of the notes and added other details in a much later hand; finally, an elaborately dissonant instrumental patch and a sketch of verses 3 to 7 are also in a much later hand.

—An example that may serve to define Ives's practice of silently modernizing his scores was recently documented by Noel B. Zahler and H. Wiley Hitchcock in a paper on *The Unanswered Question* (Zahler and Hitchcock 1983). Sometime in the 1930's, they show, Ives revised the recurrent trumpet phrases—symbolizing what Ives called "The Perennial Question of Existence"—in a chromatic, even atonal direction, changing the phrase by a semitone upon each of its appearances.

—Ives's Cantata, *The Celestial Country*, was performed at the Central Presbyterian Church in New York on 18 April 1902. Most of the Cantata, to judge from the published score, was accurately described by Yellin as "an essay in conformity to late-nineteenth-century taste in Protestant church music" (1974, 506). But the published score incorporates five polytonal intonations which stand in marked stylistic contrast to the conservatism of the rest of the work. Yellin believes that the intonations were, at best, "a creative afterthought," citing the disappearance of the organ part of the original manuscript and the omission of any reference to these highly innovative materials in the programme or reviews of the 1902 performance (1974, 506–7).

A great many of Ives's datable references consist of variations on the formula: "[Addressee:] Please return to C. E. Ives at [datable address, phone number]." If they were retrospectively entered, these were intended to provide "evidence" concerning the proposed date of composition. If they were contemporaneously entered, they were presumably most often instructions to a copyist and, indeed, a copyist's name often begins the entry. However, in the latter case, we should have many more fair copies than have survived. (It is certainly puzzling to find datable references to copyists on works that remained incomplete or for which there are no fair copies.) Here again there are several possibilities: Ives could have discarded the fair copies after later copies of the same work were made, in which case we may assume that the scores had undergone significant revisions; or we are

entitled to speculate that the earlier fair copies had never existed. The Piano Trio can serve as an example of these issues:

—In his lists, Ives dated his Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano “1904–11,” a date consistent with the datable references on all three movements. But although there are instructions to the copyist, Mr. Price, on the sketches of the phantasmagoric second movement in “spatial form,” no fair copy of it exists; there are fair copies only for the conventional first and third movements and each of these is done by a different copyist, with the Roman numerals “I” and “III” added after the fact in each instance. In the photostatic collection of Ives’s *Chamber Music* in 9 volumes, made between 1927 and 1950 (New York Public Library), the second movement is represented only by his own score-sketch, the same score-sketch on which he instructed Mr. Price: “only V & B parts to copy—p. 4–8 C E Ives 70 W. 11 Spring 445.”

A striking oddity of Ives’s scores is that many of the identifying publisher’s marks have been cut out of the music paper. Kirkpatrick wonders whether this was done because the marks were seen by Ives as “symbols of commercialism” or to tear out the words “Made in Germany” (Kirkpatrick 1960, viii). But too many of the marks remain intact to support these conjectures. Ives himself did not satisfactorily explain the excisions: on a leaf for the First Orchestral Set he comments that “a rather personal remark, true but not polite, was cut out of these 2 pages & another page . . . ,” an explanation possible but scarcely consistent with the wide variety of highly personal remarks which spice his autographs; and, when the margin-trimming was discussed in connection with the *Concord* Sonata, he did not give a plain explanation (Kirkpatrick 1960, 88). It seems likely that, just as Ives retrospectively entered alternative dates and datable references on his autographs, he may have removed printed dates and other datable marks or memoranda from his music paper.

Apart from the autographs, Ives’s “lists” are filled with contradictory datings for many of the works; and numerous datings given on the lists are in conflict with other evidence. The sketches for *Calcium Light Night* are variously given by Ives as 1898–1907, 1900, 1901 and 1906, while Kirkpatrick’s *New Grove* dating is “summer 1911.” The *Harvest Home Chorales*, which made so profound an impact when they were performed by the Robert Shaw Chorale in 1948, appear in some lists as 1897 and 1902, but as “before 1912” in four other lists. It has been suggested that Ives may have changed them in a modernist direction “when he reconstructed them later” (Rossiter 1975, 333, n. 39). *Central Park in the Dark* is given as 1898–1907, while Kirkpatrick assigns it to the latter half of 1906. Kirkpatrick places the First

Orchestral Set in 1911-14, while Ives, on the basis that the work incorporates his earlier *Country Band March*, predates it to 1903. Here and elsewhere the earliest date of conception or first sketching may be offered as the date of actual composition. Ives dates the First Symphony 1896-98 in his lists but on the full score of the first movement he inscribed: "finished . . . May 29, 1895." A thorough confusion surrounds Ives's recollections of *Psalm 67*. In two separate memoranda he recalled that his father had performed the work, presumably in its final two-key form: "Father, I think, succeeded in getting a choir in Danbury to sing this without an organ . . ." (Ives 1972, 178); and again, without a tinge of uncertainty: Father "tried [it] in the choirs but had a hard time . . ." (Ives 1972, 47). The difficulty here is that Ives, on his lists, himself dated the Psalm to 1898, four years after George Ives's death.¹²

An important group of the problematical datings center in Ives's years at Yale. Here he found it expedient to claim that Horatio Parker, in contrast to Ives's father, very early opposed his experimental compositions, which thereafter were withheld from the professor. "After the first two or three weeks in Freshman year, I didn't bother him with any of the experimental ideas that Father had been willing for me to think about, discuss, and try out" (Ives 1972, 116). After allegedly learning that Parker objected to unresolved dissonances in Ives's compositions when shown to him in October 1894, Ives's father picturesquely advised: "Tell Parker that every dissonance doesn't have to resolve, if it doesn't happen to feel like it, any more than every horse should have to have its tail bobbed just because it's the prevailing fashion."¹³ But none of the compositions supposedly written during this period are mentioned in Ives's detailed letters home for 1893 and 1894 of which almost two score are at hand.¹⁴ The sole reference to Parker occurs in Ives's letter of 24 October 1894: "Mr. Parker gives an organ recital this evening . . ." (Ives Archives). And several further difficulties arise: first, Ives's father died in early November 1894, only a month or so after the school term opened; second, Ives's scholastic record at Yale has survived, and it shows that

¹² Kirkpatrick writes, "these psalms could hardly have been sung in church at that time" (Ives 1972, 129, n. 4), and he reminds us that no choir parts or fair copies of the Psalm have survived (Ives 1972, 179).

¹³ Ives 1972, 116. It is striking that Ives's use in *The Celestial Country* of alternating measures of 3/4 and 4/4—an idea he attributed to his father (Ives 1972, 140)—is actually directly borrowed from Parker's *Hora novissima* (Burkholder 1985, 15; Kirkpatrick, in Ives 1972, 62, n. 8).

¹⁴ Perlis 1983, 110; Ives Archives, MSS 14/Box 33/1.

in his first two years at Yale, he carried a full program of Greek, Latin, Mathematics, German, and English Literature, but no course in music; Ives was not registered for Parker's classes until his junior year, 1896. It therefore remains highly unlikely—though not wholly excludable—that Ives was tutored by Parker or audited his course as a Freshman, that he actually spent “four years with Parker,” beginning in his Freshman year, as he claimed in *Memos*.¹⁵

Obviously, all of this is data for a working hypothesis that remains to be fully substantiated. But, even with allowances for differing interpretations of the material, the evidence thus far suggests a systematic pattern of falsification sufficient for the prudent scholar to withhold acceptance of Ives's datings pending independent verification of his assertions and scrupulous testing of the evidentiary trail that he left on his autographs. Of course, if we wish, we can choose to believe everything that Ives tells us, however improbable or self-serving. But that will not take us very far. It is better to suspend judgement on the details, as we already do with the autobiographical writings of Berlioz, Wagner, Stravinsky, and so many others who served as their own heroizing biographers. Indeed, it seems possible that we can advance our understanding of Ives only by acknowledging the difficulties raised by his autobiographical writings.

It is hard to predict what implications may rise from a revised chronology of Ives's works. Certainly, his periods of productivity will have to be established and the broader patterns of his musical evolution will have to be re-examined. Several speculative hypotheses will have to be tested; among these, the possibility that Ives wrote—or rather, completed—a comparatively small amount of music during the decade or so after he abandoned his career as professional organist in April 1902, when, perhaps in reaction to the unenthusiastic critical response to the public performance of *The Celestial Country*, he opted for a career in business.¹⁶ Ives perhaps plainly told us as much in an

¹⁵ Ives 1972, 48, 115. The issue of veracity perhaps extends to Ives's posthumous quarrel with Parker as well: one may well ask why, given his dissatisfaction, he chose Parker as his only music teacher, taking two full courses in both his Junior and Senior years. Incidentally, Parker's were the only courses in which he ever achieved grades of 80 or above, his four-year average being “a gentleman's” 68. Perhaps Kirkpatrick need not have been “surprised” to hear in 1969 that “Parker had once mentioned Ives as one of the most talented young men he'd ever taught” (Ives 1972, 115, n. 1). One wonders if it is altogether fair to continue to condemn Horatio Parker as a conservative and stultifying impediment to Ives's development. Indeed, the process of correction is already under way, with Kirkpatrick, Victor Yellin, J. Peter Burkholder, and others calling attention to Parker's influence on Ives's first major—albeit non-experimental—compositions.

¹⁶ Wooldridge 1974, 110–12; Yellin 1974, 506.

ironic parenthetical memo about this biographical turning point: “when I resigned as a nice organist and *gave up music*.”¹⁷ Whether there was a resulting hiatus in his productivity remains to be determined; however, it seems very likely that during the next ten or even fifteen years Ives created sketches, outlines, and drafts for many compositional projects—almost as a novelist will preserve his observations, plot-ideas, and characterizations in his commonplace book—but managed to complete very few works. Constantly, and obsessively, he would take up earlier compositions for revision or re-use but only rarely could he find a satisfactory final form for them. Kirkpatrick observed that Ives “had a kind of scorn for what he had done in the past—typical of a person who lives always in the present.” For Ives, he continued, “the last manuscript or last version of anything was automatically the best” (Hitchcock and Perlis 1977, 72). Whether this obsession stemmed from technical difficulties, or from the creative artist’s vision of the infinitude of possibilities latent in his material, or even from a sense that only constant revision could keep his works from becoming stylistically outdated, is difficult to determine.

On 1 October 1918, Ives suffered a coronary thrombosis with suspected cardiac damage, but this scarcely diminished his productivity. On the contrary, it led to a surge of creativity, perhaps unleashed by this omen of mortality, for he had now confronted the possibility that his prodigious talents as a composer had somehow been squandered. Objectively viewed, particularly by a composer imbued with Ives’s powerful thirst for public recognition, his work up until then had been, at best, that of a dilettante, one who had perfected few works and, with rare exceptions, had been unable to achieve their performance. Now he dedicated himself to the completion of his music. It was during the very next three or four years that Ives’s first major publications appeared—the *Concord Sonata*, *Essays Before a Sonata*, and *114 Songs*. He took up his works and revised them and, where he found it convenient or necessary, he engaged others to assist him—a flock of copyists, arrangers, and, later on, even composers. He arranged for public performances of his compositions starting in the late 1910s and, throughout his later life, sponsored numerous performances of them. He had somehow come to terms with his obsession with (or fear of) “completion,” apparently recognizing that he could fix the provisional stages of his compositional

¹⁷ Ives 1972, 57, italics added. Ives told Lucille Fletcher, the author of an unpublished *New Yorker* profile on Ives, that he gave up his position so that he could devote his “spare time entirely to composition” (Fletcher, in [Ives] Compilation, unnumbered vol., 115).

process and still, like Whitman, keep open the possibility of future revision. He could even, as he found with the *Concord Sonata*, create competing versions of the same work.¹⁸

Although the years of sketching, experimentation, and outward failure were doubtless a necessary condition for the development of Ives's talents, he himself could not acknowledge what he apparently viewed as an unfulfilled, if not wasted, period. The void had to be filled retrospectively, even if this signalled folding the present into the past. Thus one wonders whether to give credence to Ives's statements about the cessation of his career as a composer. In 1931, he wrote, "I find that I did almost no composing after the beginning of 1918." He continued: "During the last ten years or so, I've completed nothing."¹⁹ Although we may now better understand the poignancy of the phrase, "I've completed nothing," we know the statement to be literally untrue, for the autographs and fair copies show that, in the following decades, he worked on, finished, or substantially revised and "updated" a great many earlier, unfinished scores or sketches. Elliott Carter's eyewitness testimony on this is both well-known and persuasive:

I can remember vividly a visit on a late afternoon to his house on East 74th Street. . . —this must have been around 1929. He was working on, I think, *Three Places in New England*, getting the score ready for performance. A new score was being derived from the older one to which he was adding and changing, turning octaves into sevenths and ninths, and adding dissonant notes. Since then, I have often wondered at exactly what date a lot of the music written early in his life received its last shot of dissonance and polyrhythm. In this case he showed me quite simply how he was improving the score. I got the impression that he might have frequently jacked up the level of dissonance of many works as his tastes changed (Perlis 1974, 138).

In this 1969 interview, Carter wondered whether Ives "was as early a precursor of 'modern' music as is sometimes made out," concluding that "the question no longer seems important" (Perlis 1974, 138). Thirty years earlier, in his brash, iconoclastic piece for *Modern Music*, entitled "The Case of Mr. Ives," Carter was less diplomatic: "The fuss that critics make about Ives' innovations is, I think, greatly exagger-

¹⁸ Ultimately, Ives elevated this aspect of his creative personality to an aesthetic principle, emphasizing flexibility of compositional choice and the performer's role as co-creator (Clark 1974, 167–86; Ives, "Notes on Performance" [Ives Archives, MSS 1695]; see also Hitchcock and Perlis 1977, 87–109).

¹⁹ Ives 1972, 112; Cowell and Cowell 1969, 91; Rossiter 1975, 109; Kirkpatrick in Ives 1972, 279.

ated, for he has rewritten his works so many times, adding dissonances and polyrhythms, that it is probably impossible to tell just at what date the works assumed the surprising form we now know. The accepted dates of publication are most likely those of the compositions in their final state" (Carter 1939, 174). Kirkpatrick, who studied and catalogued the manuscripts, confirmed that Ives was led "on several occasions to find in his early musical works . . . a dissonance which they had not contained when he had written them" (Rossiter 1975, 36), and he spoke of Ives's penchant—of which he did not always approve—for stepping up the level of dissonance in his revisions (Hitchcock and Perlis 1977, 68).

In any event, it cannot be sufficiently stressed that the value of Ives's music is wholly independent of issues of priority and modernism. This is something that he apparently did not understand. The issue was a troubling one for him, rising from his need to be free of influences, to deny ancestry, to relieve his guilt over transcendence of his father, to be the unrivalled inventor-creator. Ives somehow came to believe that originality lay in being up-to-date, in the patenting of techniques and procedures. He did not realize (or could not acknowledge) the extent of his own originality, the individuality of his style, the uniqueness of his voice. Ives's deceptions are wishes—attempts to reshape an unsatisfactory reality in accordance with his desires. By acknowledging the issues of veracity in his autobiographical writings, we may, perhaps, posthumously help to free him from his own obsessions and fears.

V

Finally, a speculation on Ives's attitudes toward music. Strength and masculinity are his heroic pose, his ideal in music. Ives's extreme prudery, his fear of intimacy, his morbid aversion to the nude female body (Rossiter 1975, 167–69), connects to his preoccupation with emasculation, his incessant ranting against "effeminacy" in music, and his quite pathological aversion to homosexuals, whom he variously derogated as "pansys," "lily pads," "old ladies," and "pussy-boys." At a concert where music by himself and Carl Ruggles was hissed, he rose up and shouted: "Don't be such a God-damn sissy. When you hear strong masculine music like this, get up and try to use your ears like a man!"²⁰ Ives wants to believe that he is impervious to music's

²⁰ Fletcher, 110. Ives himself wrote out this anecdote for Fletcher (Ives 1972, 140, n. 1).

sensuousness, preferring to view it as a purely moral discipline. Virtually the only Beethoven that Ives seems to recognize is the author of the “Fate-motif” of the C-minor Symphony. He wants to reject the sensuous in music, in sound, in life, to regard himself as a “thinker,” a “philosopher,” a “rational” maker of music. His conception of modernism is hard-edged, masculine. He scorns Mozart and Haydn, with their “nice little easy sugar plum sounds” (Kirkpatrick 1960, 221). “Richy Wagner is a soft-bodied sensualist = pussy,” he notes gratuitously on the manuscript of his own Third Violin Sonata, as though to distance himself from a contagious decadence (Kirkpatrick 1960, 80). Indeed, Ives is firmly in the tradition of such turn-of-the-century thinkers as Max Nordau, Irving Babbitt, Spengler, and Tolstoy (d’Indy and Mason in music), for whom the struggle against eroticism and decadence in art took on the character of a moral crusade. Like them, Ives is at war against the “indecent,” the “decadent,” and the “degenerate,” and he has the misfortune to believe that music and its composers are often—even usually—embodiments of these. He holds that the genius is by nature drawn toward the perverse and thus must fortify himself, as he wrote in an unused insert to *Essays Before a Sonata*, by “that self-restraint . . . which can control the emotional & intellectual impulses, as a ‘man’ not a degenerate . . .” (Ives 1970, 253, n. 52). There is a potentially ominous Social Darwinist strain—and one quite at odds with the teachings of Emerson and Thoreau—in Ives’s suggestions that “things have gone soft” in America: “Is the Anglo-Saxon going ‘Pussy’?—the nice Lizzies—the do-it-proper boys of today—the cushions of complacency— . . . the femaled-male crooners . . . Is [America] gradually losing her manhood?” (Ives 1972, 133–34). As for music, Ives writes, it “must be a part of the great organic flow, onwards and always upwards, or become soft in muscles and spirit, and die!” (Ives 1972, 136). He is both drawn to music and repelled by it. “As a boy [I was] partially ashamed of” music, he recalled—“an entirely wrong attitude but it was strong—most boys in American country towns, I think, felt the same . . . And there may be something in it. Hasn’t music always been too much an emasculated art?” (Ives 1972, 130–31). To ward off such feelings, Ives would eradicate the traces of the “soft-bodied” and the “decadent” in his own work, perhaps employing the techniques of modernism to conceal the atmospheric, lyrical, yielding strata which often underlie his first ideas. His music issues from a contest between opposing aspects of his own nature: Burkholder may be right that “the Ives who talked about the emasculation of music is not the Ives who wrote the music” (letter

to the author, 13 April 1987). It is a commonplace that prejudice and zealotry are often outward displacements of a drive to root out unwanted or unacceptable feelings within. Ives spent much of his last decades in a curious revisionism: revising his scores and reshaping their history, modifying the past, revising out of existence the painfully unsatisfying manifestations of his early life and inner feelings.

The result has been to make Ives appear as being essentially outside the mainstream of music history, as somehow disconnected from contemporary currents. Goddard Lieberson recalled: "It was as if you had gone into the north woods, and somebody said to you, 'Hey, there's a fellow up there who composes'" (Perlis 1974, 208). But this is to accept Ives's own mythology. Though it is true that he now seems to stand in an asynchronous relation to musical currents, this is not necessarily a permanent condition. It arose from several circumstances: first, that his "experimental" works—with their many extraordinary innovations, their "shock of the new"—reached public performance long after they were conceived; second, that the uncertain and questionable datings, along with the successive layers of revision of certain works over years during which Ives was experimenting with, absorbing, and integrating a wide variety of modern techniques, create a disorienting stylistic effect. (It is as though Henry James's revisions of his works for the New York Edition—with all the characteristics of his last style—had become known to us solely as products of the nineteenth century.) This clouds our ability to "place" Ives's music, not only in relation to the music of others, but within the evolution of his own style.

To clarify these ambiguities, we will have to determine the extent to which Debussy, Mahler, Scriabin, and Stravinsky may have influenced Ives²¹ and the extent to which Ives was receptive to the theories of European modernism and their associated practices. Such an historical perspective may validate Charles Seeger's observation that Ives's uniqueness was that he "simply accepted the diversity," mixing "styles, idioms, and genres to an extent no other composer in our history . . . has done" (Seeger 1939, 398). We may ultimately discover another element of Ives's uniqueness to rise from the superimposed layers of revisions over extensive periods of time, resulting in what we may term a "simultaneity of style" analogous to the simultaneity of musical event which is the usually-noted hallmark

²¹ Gibbens 1985; see also Burkholder 1983, 462–68, 684–94.

of his music.²² The potentiality for reinterpretation of Ives's music now rests, it seems to me, upon achieving an accurate chronology of his compositions and a fuller understanding of the process by which they reached their final states. But this will require some revising of our own.

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²² I owe this suggestion to Eva Solomon.

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ABSTRACT

Ives's autobiographical writings raise issues of veracity, including those bearing on his posthumous idealization of his relationship to his father, George Ives, and his crediting of his father with having anticipated many procedures and techniques of twentieth-century modernism. The magnification of his father's influence is intertwined with a denial of other musical influences as well as with an obsessive concern over issues of priority. An examination of Ives's autographs suggests that he retrospectively sought to predate numerous works, both as to their commencement and completion. A revised chronology of Ives's creative evolution would appear to be in order.